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Social ISSUES

MAINS 365

Classroom Study Material 2026

June 2025 to April 2026

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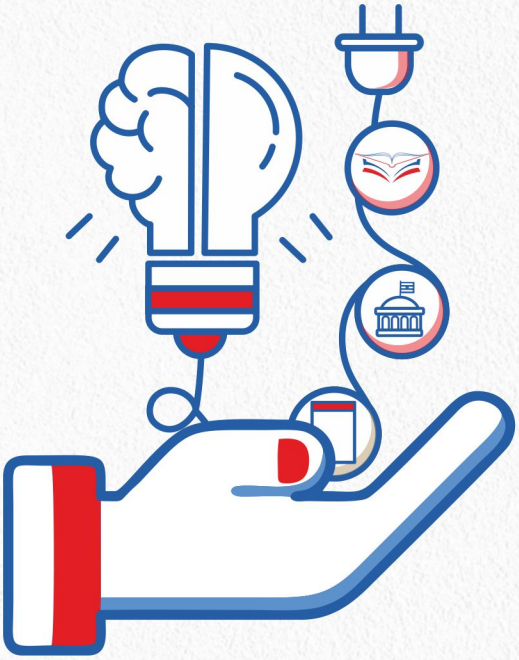
OPTIONAL SUBJECT CLASSES 2027



- Geography
- Physics
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- Political Science and International Relations
- Sociology — Starts : 1 JULY
- Anthropology
- History
- Public Administration — Starts : 15 JULY

SOCIAL ISSUES

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MAINS EDGE 45
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Preface

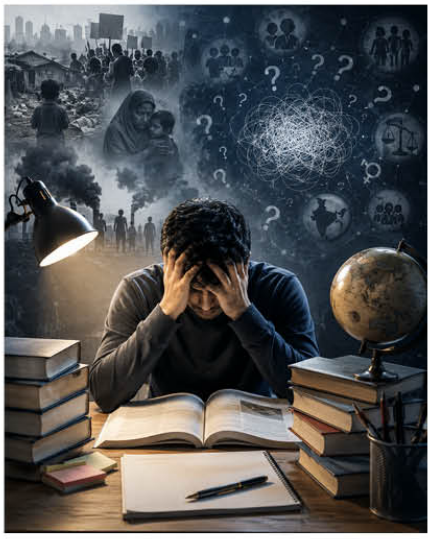
To the Aspirants

The UPSC Civil Services Mains Examination is not merely a test of knowledge but a challenge of precision, clarity, and smart revision. In the dynamic and vast syllabus of both **General Studies Paper I (Indian Society)** and **General Studies Paper II (Social Justice and Vulnerable Sections)**, Social Issues play a decisive role in boosting overall marks. Recognizing this, VISION IAS brings to you the **Mains 365 - Social Issues**, a meticulously curated document designed to serve as your ultimate revision companion.

This document is not just a compilation of societal problems and welfare schemes, it is a **strategic tool crafted to help aspirants enhance answer quality**, incorporate contemporary social developments with conceptual clarity, and fetch those crucial extra marks that make the difference in the final selection. With theme-based categorization driven by deep PYQ analysis (covering Women, Children, Vulnerable Sections, Education, Health, and emerging issues like Digital Addiction), value-added insights, and model-ready frameworks, this compilation allows you to revise comprehensively and quickly, even during the intense last few days before the exam.

Let this be your go-to guide for clarity, for revision, and for success.

Q1. WHY DO ASPIRANTS STRUGGLE WITH GS-I & GS-II SOCIAL ISSUES?



- **Fragmented Sources:** Jumping between multiple newspapers, sociological commentaries, and government reports creates confusion and information overload.
- **Subjective vs. Analytical Disconnect:** Knowing the basic social issues (like dowry or child marriage) is not enough if you cannot link them to contemporary changes, legal frameworks, and structural analysis.
- **Data Fatigue:** Facts are abundant across NFHS, NCRB, and UN reports, but few know where and how to use them effectively to validate social arguments.
- **Changing Question Formats:** UPSC questions now frequently blend static social concepts with highly dynamic technological or economic shifts (e.g., AI's impact on society and parenting, digital addiction, or the right to disconnect).

Mains 365 Social Issues is built to solve these exact challenges.

Q2. WHY IS THIS DOCUMENT YOUR EDGE IN GS PAPER-I & II?

- **Mirrors UPSC's Demand and Trends:** It strictly aligns with the UPSC trend, capturing shifts from traditional societal issues to modern vulnerabilities like middle-class anxiety, digital isolation, and the 'manosphere'.
- **Theme-Based Categorization:** Every topic from Female Labour Force Participation to the Juvenile Justice System is mapped to current affairs with a clear Context-Analysis-Way Forward framework.
- **1-Page 'Topic at a Glance':** Provides ready-to-use frameworks and infographic summaries for major themes like Marriage, Women at Workplace, and Tribal Populations for faster recall.

Q3. HOW DOES IT ENHANCE ANSWER WRITING?

Let's take a Question: A blanket nationwide ban on social media for children solves a public health crisis but risks creating fresh socio-economic vulnerabilities and digital exclusions. Critically analyze.

Answer Framework: This document provides balanced arguments and real-world examples to critically analyze such restrictive policy measures with precision. For instance:

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INTRODUCTION CAN BE ADDED FROM HERE:

- **Context:** Start by mentioning that Australia became the first country to enforce a nationwide social media ban for children under 16 under the Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Act 2024 or Karnataka's new law.

BODY PART 1 FROM HERE:

Arguments in Favour of the Ban

- **Cognitive Development:** Excessive use affects concentration, learning, and memory.
- **Mental Health:** Social media addiction increases anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).
- **Physical Health:** Promotes sedentary lifestyle, disrupted sleep, obesity, eating disorders.
- **Social Development:** Reduces face-to-face interaction, causes isolation, family strain.
- **Online Safety:** Children exposed to cyberbullying, sexual predators, harmful content.
- **Dangerous Trends:** Viral challenges can cause injuries or legal issues. E.g. "Blackout Challenge" (breath-holding)
- **Parental Supervision Gaps:** Urban dual-working households may lead to excessive screen time. E.g. **"iPad kid" phenomenon**
- **Algorithmic Manipulation:** Personalized content drives addiction and overuse.

BODY PART 2 FROM HERE:

Arguments Against the Ban

- **Age Verification & Privacy:** Risk of loopholes; verification methods may compromise privacy.
- **Over-Regulation:** Legitimate users on gaming/communication platforms may be restricted.
- **Unsafe Spaces:** Children may shift to dark web or unregulated platforms.
- **Human Rights & Inclusion:** Restricts freedom of expression; may exclude vulnerable groups.
- **Digital Skill Limitation:** Reduces creative, educational, and collaborative opportunities.

INFOGRAPHIC FOR VALUE ADDITION

Steps taken to Protect children from Social Media

India: State-level Bans:

- **Karnataka b**ecame first state to ban social media for children **under 16.**
- **Andhra Pradesh** proposed law to ban social media for children **under-13.**
- **Goa** is studying the possibility of implementing Social media ban for children **under-16**

Globe:

- **Nationwide ban on social media:** Australia, Indonesia, Malaysia (Under 16); France (under 15).
- **United States:** Kids Online Safety Act provides protections for children online related to privacy and mental health concerns.
- **U.K.:** Online Safety Act, 2023 sets tougher standards for social media platforms like facebook-including appropriate age restrictions.
- **European Union:** General Data Protection Regulation required Parental consent for processing of personal data for children under age of **16,** though member states can lower that limit to **13.**

CONCLUSION/WAY FORWARD FROM HERE:

Way Forward

- **Child-Centric Digital Governance:** Governments, tech firms, and parents must ensure safe online spaces; adopt age-appropriate design and algorithm accountability.
- **Redressal Mechanisms:** Empower Child Helpline 1098, cyber nodal officers, POCSO e-box for reporting threats.
- **Digital Skills & Education:** Promote responsible online behavior; e.g., Kerala's Digital De-Addiction centres for digital addiction.
- **Awareness Campaigns:** NIPUN Bharat and Digital India programs educate children, parents, teachers.
- **Parental Involvement:** Joint account setup, privacy settings, screen-time management tools.
- **Tech Accountability:** Platforms should create child-safe spaces; age limits enforced (e.g., Meta 13+).

Conclusion

By prioritising age-appropriate design, digital literacy, and safe online spaces, societies can ensure that children are shielded from risks without being excluded from the positive and empowering potential of the digital world.

Q4. WHAT MAKES IT 'EXAM-READY'?

- **GS-I & GS-II Aligned Structure:** Each chapter maps directly to syllabus heads such as Indian Society, Women, Children, Vulnerable Sections, Education, Health, and Poverty/Developmental Issues.
- **Ready-to-Quote Facts & Terminology:** Provides essential keywords like Conspicuous Consumption, Digital Babysitting, Silver Economy, and Double-Income-No-Kid (DINK) families to elevate the sociological tone of your answers.
- **Coverage of Blind Spots:** Addresses low-frequency but emerging potential areas like the 'Manosphere', 'Right to Disconnect', and 'Cancel Culture'.

Q5. WHAT'S THE LAST-MILE BENEFIT IN THE EXAM HALL?

When others are trying to recall scattered data points to decipher a complex quote, you will already be structuring your 150/250-word answers. This document provides pre-packaged points for "critically analyze" and "elucidate" directives, built not just for syllabus coverage, but for rapid retention, instant recall, and razor-sharp delivery under time pressure.

Final Word

Treat this document as your answer bank. Use it to enrich your notes, simulate PYQ responses, and visualize your answers in the formal, strategic language that UPSC examiners reward. Remember, when robust conceptual content meets clarity and current context, high marks follow.

When Sociological insight meets current evidence and structured presentation, answer quality improves.

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1. INDIAN SOCIETY

1.1. DECOLONISING THE INDIAN MIND

Why in the News?

Prime Minister urges **10-Year national pledge to shed Colonial Mindset** rooted in British MP Thomas Babington **Macaulay's Legacy**.

Key aspects of Colonial Mindset in India

- **Instilled Inferiority:** Macaulay's policy broke India's self-confidence and instilled a **"sense of inferiority"** by marginalizing indigenous knowledge in science, art, philosophy.
  - E.g. Foreign academia, corporate standards, policy design etc. are considered superior.
- **Language:** Use of **English** in courts and universities is seen as aspirational, sometimes **hindering access** for non-English speakers.
  - E.g., Former CJI D.Y. Chandrachud stated that "English language in its 'legal avatar' is **not comprehensible to 99.9% of the citizens**".
- **Culture:** Imposition of western cultural elements including dresses, food, art forms, manners, and values often projects Indian culture as inferior.
  - E.g., Western dress codes are tied to professionalism, deep-seated preference for lighter skin tones (colorism).
- **Colonial era Laws & Institutions:** Rooted in establishing control rather than service. E.g. Forest Laws, Sedition etc.
- **Imported Economic System:** Over-emphasis on private capital led to impoverishment of a large section of population.
- **Knowledge Systems:** Indigenous knowledge systems (e.g. Ayurveda) treated inferior due to emphasis on imported models of research and innovation.
- **Social differences: E.g., Caste stereotypes** were hardened through convenient colonial categorization, constructing over-simplistic Indian social identities.

Cultural movements to tackle Colonial Mindset

- **Arya Samaj (1875):** Swami Dayanand Saraswati's slogan **"Back to the Vedas,"** aimed to purify Hinduism, rejected western influences.
- **Ramakrishna Mission (1897):** Emphasized the universal spirit of all religions and promoted Indian spiritual traditions in the West.
- **Swadeshi Movement (1905–1908): Swadeshi** as a vital tool for India's economic development, **rejecting Western goods and cultural** consumption in favor of indigenous textiles, music, art, and theatre.
- **The Bengal School of Art:** By **Abanindranath Tagore,** it focused on rejecting Western academic realism, reviving traditional Indian artistic styles and sought inspiration from **Mughal, Pahari art.**
- **Nationalist historiography:** Nationalist historians focussed on national pride. E.g. M.G. Ranade, R. C. Majumdar etc.

Initiatives taken to Remove Colonial Vestiges

- **Repealing Laws:** Government **repealed over 1,500 obsolete colonial-era laws**, replaced IPC, CrPC, Evidence Act with Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam (BSA).
- **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020:** Promotes teaching in the **mother tongue** (Bharatiya languages).
- **Symbolic and Nomenclature Changes**: Rajpath in New Delhi renamed **"Kartavya Path",** Race Course Road renamed as **Lok Kalyan Marg**.
- **Revival and institutionalization of traditional knowledge:** E.g. WHO Global Centre for Traditional Medicine (GCTM) **(2022)** in Jamnagar, Gujarat.
- **New Naval Ensign (2022):** Inspired by the **seal of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj.**
- **Budgetary Changes: Railway Budget merged with annual Union Budget** in 2017.

Way Forward

- **'Panchpran' Pledge:** Includes a resolve of developed India; removing any trace of colonial mindset; taking pride in our legacy; India's strength of unity and fulfilling the duties of citizens with honesty.
- **Cognitive Decolonisation:** Policy Measures such as promoting Indian languages in the National Education Policy, reviving indigenous knowledge systems etc.
- **Behavioural and economic Shift**: Support a shift towards self-reliant innovation, sustainable lifestyles and community-centred development. E.g., Mission LiFE.
- **Cultural Revival:** Revitalization of indigenous festivals and crafts, e.g., International Yoga Day.
- **Epistemic Decolonisation:** Promoting plural and diverse liberatory thinking by challenging the dominance of Western knowledge systems.
- **Restoring Pride and Heritage with responsibility**: in line with constitutional values, scientific temper and social justice.

Conclusion

True decolonisation demands a fundamental reimagining of how India thinks, learns, and governs. By reclaiming indigenous knowledge, languages, and cultural pride while embracing constitutional values and scientific temper, India can forge a self-reliant, confident civilisational identity fit for the 21st century.

1.2. CULTURAL APPROPRIATION

Why in the News?

Italian luxury brand Prada was accused of cultural appropriation for selling flat leather sandals resembling India's traditional Geographical Indication (GI)-tagged Kolhapuri chappals.

What is Cultural Appropriation?

- Cultural appropriation refers to the act of adopting elements from one culture by members of another.
- It involves **profiting** financially or socially from another culture **without consent**.
- **Other examples:**
  - **U.S brand Starbucks** "Golden Latte" mirrors traditional Indian **Haldi Doodh (turmeric milk).**
  - **Italian brand Gucci's floral kaftan** closely resembled the **Indian kurta.**

Reasons behind Cultural Appropriation

- **Lack of protection mechanism:** Intellectual property (IP) systems like patents, trademarks, or copyrights protect individual innovation and not collective cultural heritage.
- **Issues with GI Tag:** GI rights are **territorial and limited internationally,** making legal action difficult abroad. E.g., Kolhapuri chappals in Italy.
- **Digital Marketplace Loopholes**: Online resale markets and digital reproductions remain largely unchecked**.**
- **Lack of enforcement and awareness:** Over 10,000 families make Kolhapuri chappals in Maharashtra, but only **95 are registered under the GI framework.**

Ethical dimensions involved in Cultural Appropriation

- **Violations of Kantian Ethics (Categorical Imperative):** Appropriating cultural expressions **without consent** treats communities as **means to an end** (profit), than **ends in themselves.**
- **Utilitarianism:** Short-term gains for companies create long-term harm to cultural dignity and socio-economic well-being of marginalized communities**.**
- **Erosion of Artisan Livelihoods:** Cultural appropriation violates **Amartya Sen's Capability Approach** by denying artisans and cultural communities the freedom, dignity, and economic opportunities.

How has globalization impacted India's cultural heritage?

Positive Impact:

- **Cultural Exchange**: Indian classical music instruments like the **sitar and tabla** feature in Western and fusion music.
- **Global Recognition: Yoga, Ayurveda, Bollywood**, etc. have gained worldwide popularity.

Negative Impact:

- **Homogenisation of Culture:** Global platforms like **Netflix and Instagram** are shaping youth culture, often at the cost of local arts and folklore.
- **Cultural erosion:** Traditional Indian attire like **sarees** and **dhoti-kurta** is increasingly replaced by Western clothing.

Conclusion

Cultural appropriation, as seen with Prada's Kolhapuri chappal controversy, highlights the need for stronger global IP protections and ethical practices to preserve marginalized communities' cultural heritage and artisan livelihoods.

1.3. TIER-2 INFLUENCERS REDEFINING CULTURAL CAPITAL IN DIGITAL INDIA

Why in the News?

Recent emergence of **Tier-2 and Tier-3 digital influencers** – content creators from smaller towns and regional cities – have had profound impact on the dynamics of digital influence and cultural capital in India.

What is Cultural Capital?

- **Cultural capital** refers to non-economic assets like education, language, and cultural knowledge that confer social mobility. (**Pierre Bourdieu**)
- **Traditional Cultural Capital in India**
  - **Metro dominance**: Cities like Delhi and Mumbai shape cultural trends in media, fashion, and entertainment.
  - **Language hierarchy**: English and upper-caste dialects dominate intellectual and aesthetic spaces.
  - **Elite institutions**: Cultural validation stemmed from associations with institutions like Film and Television Institute of India (FTII), NSD, Doordarshan, etc.

Rise of Tier-2 Influencers

- It includes Creators from cities like Jaipur, Patna, Surat, Guwahati etc. with large social media following but rooted in regional identity.
- **Platform access**: social media (YouTube, Instagram, etc.) democratized content creation.

How Tier-2 Influencers Redefine Cultural Capital

- **Decentralization of Taste and Influence:** Previously urban-centric symbols of sophistication are now complemented by rural/regional symbols.
  - **E.g.,** Village-based creators like Pujarini Pradhan (lifeofpujaa), Kiran Dembla.
- **Vernacular as Cultural Power: More than 50% of urban internet users** prefer content in regional language. (IAMAI)
- **Revival of Folk and Local Traditions: E.g., YouTube channels** like Village Cooking Channel (Tamil Nadu) have 30M+ subscribers; Rajasthan's Manganiyar music promoted through Instagram Reels.
- **Democratisation of Aspiration:** Influencers like Saurav Joshi featuring his simple life, family, and relatable activities, redefines **success as authenticity, not sophistication**.
- **Platform for Subaltern Voices: E.g.,** Khabar Lahariya, a grassroots rural digital newsroom run by Dalit women.

Implications for Indian Society

- **Cultural Democratization:** Legitimizes diverse aesthetics, customs, and practices once considered '**non-mainstream'**.
- **Economic Empowerment:** ~80% of creators on ShareChat and Moj are from Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities, utilizing new monetisation models such as microtransactions to drive earnings.
- **Changing Political Landscape:** Tier-2 influencers become **digital opinion-makers** in elections; aiding in **mobilizing regional youth** on issues like jobs, caste, and local pride, etc.
- **Bridging Urban-Rural Divide:** Creates a sense of **shared national identity** that accommodates local pride; challenges stereotypes of rural India as regressive or culturally inferior.

Challenges and Ethical Concerns

- **Digital Divide:** Rural internet penetration still lags behind urban India; limited access to devices and training limits quality of content.
- **Algorithmic Bias:** Social media algorithms prioritize clickbait or sensational content; big businesses still favour polished metro creators for brand partnerships.
- **Stereotyping and Tokenism:** Rural culture sometimes showcased as "exotic" rather than authentic; Brands may co-opt regional identity without genuine engagement, etc.
- **Commodification of Culture:** Local rituals or practices often oversimplified for virality, risking distortion.

Conclusion

As Digital India grows, by making **vernacular visible, regional relevant, and subaltern powerful**, Tier-2 influencers herald a more inclusive and democratic cultural discourse, valuing **authenticity over elitism** and **diversity over uniformity**.

1.4. CANCEL CULTURE

Why in the News?

Celebrities like **actors and comedians** have faced being 'cancelled' for their statements or jokes, highlighting the **growing 'cancel culture'** in today's digital age.

What is Cancel Culture?

Cancel culture is the collective withdrawal of support, legitimacy, or social acceptance from an individual, organization, brand, or institution perceived to have engaged in objectionable conduct, speech, or behavior.

- It is primarily facilitated through social media, public boycotts, online campaigns, and reputational sanctions.

Drivers of Cancel Culture

- **Institutional failures:** Legal, political, and organizational systems often fail to adequately address discrimination, harassment, abuse, or hate speech, pushing citizens toward collective online action.
- **Digital democratization:** Social media provides a platform to mobilize and challenge powerful actors, especially for marginalized communities.
- **Demand for accountability:** Public figures and institutions are increasingly expected to align with contemporary ethical and social norms.
- **Rise of identity politics:** Greater awareness of caste, gender, race, religion, sexuality, and other social identities has heightened sensitivity to exclusionary or discriminatory conduct.

Cancel Culture as Social Justice	Cancel Culture as Social Bullying
Holds powerful actors **accountable and gives voice to marginalized groups; encourages acceptable behaviour** and **discourages**	Functions as **digital vigilantism** and **Performative Activism**; reduces complex issues to simplistic moral binaries ("good" vs "bad").

deviant behaviour in society. E.g. #MeToo, #BlackLivesMatter	
Corrects **institutional failures** by pressuring organizations towards ethical and inclusive practices	Circumvents **due process**; public opinion replaces evidence-based assessment, undermining **principles of fairness and natural justice.**
Promotes **ethical standards and social awareness** regarding sexism, racism, casteism, homophobia. E.g., action against comedians promoting misogynistic views	Enables **disproportionate punishment**, often prioritizes **punitive exclusion over corrective justice.**
Facilitates **collective action.**	Creates **fear, self-censorship, and mob-driven polarization** E.g. backlash against jewellery and clothing brands for portraying interfaith harmony in advertisements.

Consequences for Various Stakeholders

- **Individual**
  - **Positive**: Encourages responsible public behavior, Greater awareness of social sensitivities.
  - **Negative**: Reputational damage, Loss of economic opportunities, Mental health challenges, Permanent stigma despite corrective actions, Lack of opportunity for redemption.
- **Marginalized Communities**
  - **Positive**: Challenge entrenched power structures and amplify historically ignored voices.
  - **Negative**: Sensationalizing may dilute genuine grievances, Backlash and polarization can undermine long-term social justice goals.
- **Society and Democratic Discourse**
  - **Positive**: Increases civic engagement, social awareness, and participation in public debate.
  - **Negative**: Polarization, Erosion of constructive dialogue, Growth of echo chambers and intolerance, weakens **deliberative democracy** impacting **freedom of speech and expression** E.g. Self-censorship among academics, artists, journalists, and citizens.
- **Businesses and Organizations**
  - **Positive**: Upholds ethics, responsiveness and accountability.
  - **Negative**: Risks Reputational crises, Economic losses from boycott campaigns and over-cautious decision-making.

Way Forward

- **Promote Restorative Justice**: Encourage apology, dialogue, and behavioral change than permanent exclusion.
- **Proportionality**: Align consequences with the gravity of actions.
- **Strengthen Due Process**: Promote fact verification, Respect principles of fairness and presumption of innocence.
- **Digital Ethics**: Promote responsible online engagement; Discourage harassment, doxxing, and coordinated abuse.
- **Democratic values**: Address underlying institutional inequalities rather than individual cancellations alone, Balance accountability with freedom of expression.

Conclusion

Cancel culture represents both an **instrument of democratic accountability** and a **potential mechanism of digital exclusion**. The challenge for contemporary societies is to balance **accountability with fairness, justice with compassion, and criticism with the possibility of redemption**.

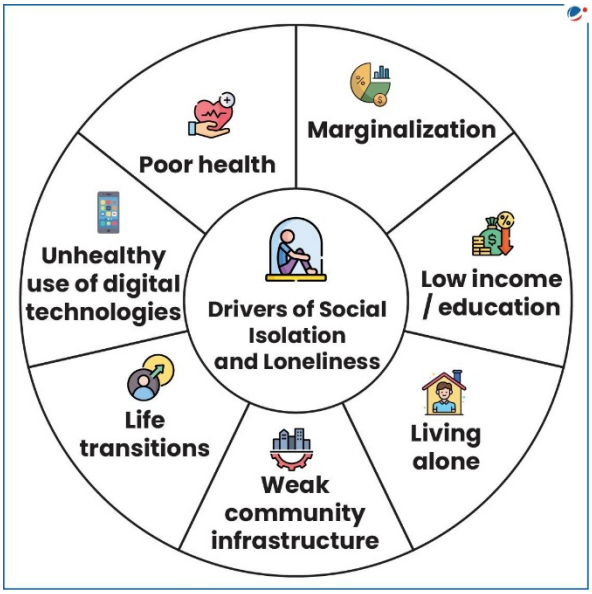
1.5. SOCIAL ISOLATION

Why in the news?

The WHO report 'From Loneliness to Social Connection: Charting a Path to Healthier Societies' highlights the impact of social isolation and loneliness on health, well-being, and society.

What is Social Connection and Disconnection?

- **Social connection** is about the **ways we relate to and interact with others** including family, friends, classmates, coworkers, neighbours.
- **Social disconnection** occurs when a person doesn't have enough **social contact**, doesn't feel supported by relationships, or has strained or negative relationships. Forms of social disconnection includes:
  - **Loneliness** (discrepancy between one's desired and actual experiences of connection)
  - **Social Isolation (**having very few relationships or not seeing people often enough).



Key Highlights of Report

- **Social Disconnection:** About **1 in 6 people feel lonely** (2014–2023) with young people (ages 13-29) feeling the loneliest.
  - Up to **1 in 3 older adults** (1990-2022) and about **1 in 4 teenagers** (2003-2018) are socially isolated.
- **Disparities:** In **low-income countries**, about **24% of people feel lonely** while in richer countries, 11% feel lonely.
- **Impact of Social Disconnection:** Loneliness caused **~871,000 deaths** (2014-2019); harms **mental health, learning, and productivity**.

Roadmap for Improving Social Connection

- **Policy:** National Policy to encourage social connection as adopted by Denmark, Finland and Germany.
- **Research:** Building research capacity and launch Grand Challenges in Social Connection.
- **Interventions:** Launch an intervention accelerator and strengthen social infrastructure (community spaces and services).
- **Improved Measurement:** Developing a global Social Connection Index.
- **Public Engagement:** Public campaigns, group activities and social prescribing (suggestion by doctors to participate in community activities).

Conclusion

As societies become increasingly digital and urbanized, fostering meaningful social connections through inclusive policies, community engagement and stronger social infrastructure is essential for healthier, resilient and cohesive societies.

1.6. RISE IN MIDDLE-CLASS VULNERABILITY

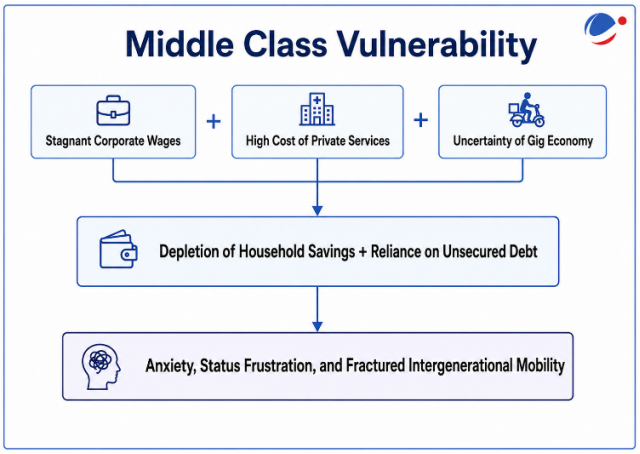
Why in the News?

Despite strong GDP growth, a middle-class crisis threatens demand, stability, and India's demographic dividend, as rising geo-economic uncertainty deepens India's Middle-Class Vulnerability.

Middle Class Vulnerability

- **Privatization of Social Services**: The systematic underfunding of public infrastructure has turned essential social goods into expensive commercial liabilities, impacting affordability for middle class.
  - E.g. increased Out-of-Pocket Expenditure (OOPE) on health, commercialization of education
- **Lack of job creation:** Formal sector fails to absorb 8 million new graduates annually. Graduate **unemployment stands at 29.1%, nine times higher** than for those without schooling.
- **Technological Displacement:** AI rapidly eliminating routine cognitive jobs in clerical and IT services.
- **Stagnant real wages:** Middle-income households saw **only 0.4% CAGR income growth** (2012-13 to 2023-24).
- **Surging cost of living:** Double-digit inflation in housing, education, and healthcare
  - **Household debt** reached about **45.5% of GDP** by September 2025, driven largely by consumption-related borrowing. (RBI)
- **Infrastructure Deficit:** Power outages, erratic water supply, poor connectivity, and traffic congestion add hidden costs and lost productive hours.

Other reasons for the rising middle-class vulnerability


Middle Class Vulnerability
Stagnant Corporate Wages
+
High Cost of Private Services
+
Uncertainty of Gig Economy
Depletion of Household Savings + Reliance on Unsecured Debt
Anxiety, Status Frustration, and Fractured Intergenerational Mobility

- **Geopolitical impact:** West Asia & Ukraine-Russia wars caused energy, fertilizer, food price spikes affecting livelihoods.
- **Welfare Exclusion:** While lower-income groups are experiencing upward mobility supported by government welfare schemes, the middle class, which contributes 53% of all income tax filings, remains ineligible for these safety nets.
- **Patriarchy and Gender Disparities**: Female labour force participation is only 32.4% vs 77.6% for males (World Bank 2025), increasing single-income vulnerability.
- **Persistent caste-based economic stratification: More than 66% of Group C safai karmacharis** employed across the central government come from SC, ST, or OBC backgrounds. (Department of Personnel and Training's annual report 2024-25).
- **Corporate Concentration:** The liberalization of the economy has concentrated market power in the hands of a few large corporations, impacting traditional middle-class entrepreneurs, business owners, etc.

Implications of middle-class vulnerability

- **Economic impact:** Net household financial savings hit a low of ~5% of GDP; Top 1% captures over 22% of national income (World Inequality Lab).
  - By 2036, India's middle class and affluent consumers will account for 93% of all spending, up from 80% in 2026 (WEF) having implications on macroeconomic stability.
- **Socio-Political**: Rising anxiety, depression, and financial stress-linked suicides (4,970 in 2018 to over 7,529 in 2024 (NCRB)); Leads to brain drain, delayed healthcare/education, and trapped social mobility.

Government Initiatives for alleviating middle class vulnerability

- **Direct Income Tax Relief** up to ₹12 lakh income (Budget 2025-26).
- **PMAY-U 2.0** for affordable housing.
- **Ayushman Bharat** expansion- Health assurance (up to ₹5 Lakh) for senior citizens;
- Skill India, PMKVY, & PM MUDRA Yojana for skilling & credit; RERA and SWAMIH Fund for real estate stability.

Conclusion

Adopting tools like a Multi-Dimensional Vulnerability Index can help policymakers identify those most at risk and design targeted interventions.

1.7. AI AND SOCIETY AT A GLANCE

AI and Society

The growing integration of **Artificial Intelligence** into everyday life is now reshaping **social interactions** and **Institutions**.

Impact of AI on Society

Family: Shapes child socialization and social interactions; AI companions/social bots may foster hyper-individualism.	**Education:** Enables personalized learning and wider access but may weaken teacher-student bonds and widen the digital divide.	**Economy & Work:** Drives **K-shaped growth**, reshapes labour markets, and widens **income inequality.**
Culture: Democratizes content creation and cultural exchange but risks homogenization and **algorithmic echo chambers.** E.g. AI-generated art, literature challenge creativity and cultural authenticity	**Social Structure:** May reinforce historical biases (racism, sexism, casteism) embedded in training data.	**Polity and Governance:** Enhances service delivery and policy targeting but may enable surveillance, predictive policing, and **misinformation/deepfakes,** eroding social trust.

Principles for Responsible Management of AI (NITI Aayog)

Safety and Reliability	**Equality**	**Inclusivity and Non-discrimination**	**Privacy and security**	**Transparency**	**Accountability**	**Protection and Reinforcement of Positive Human Values**

Way Forward

Democratize AI Governance: Multi-stakeholder regulation involving governments, civil society, communities, and industry.	**Digital Literacy:** Mainstream AI literacy and critical thinking education (e.g., **AI for All Programme**).	**Equity-Centred Design:** Mandate bias audits and ensure diverse AI development teams.
Human Capital Development: Invest in reskilling/upskilling for AI-driven labour transitions.	**Ethical AI Standards:** Ensure transparent, explainable, accountable AI with human oversight and global cooperation. E.g., adopt a **human-in-the-loop** approach in healthcare, law, and education.	

1.7.1. AI'S GROWING ROLE IN PARENTING

Why in the News?

OpenAI CEO Sam Altman underlined AI's growing role in parenting, raising questions regarding the potential **benefits and risks** associated with using **AI in Parenting**.

Benefits of AI in Parenting

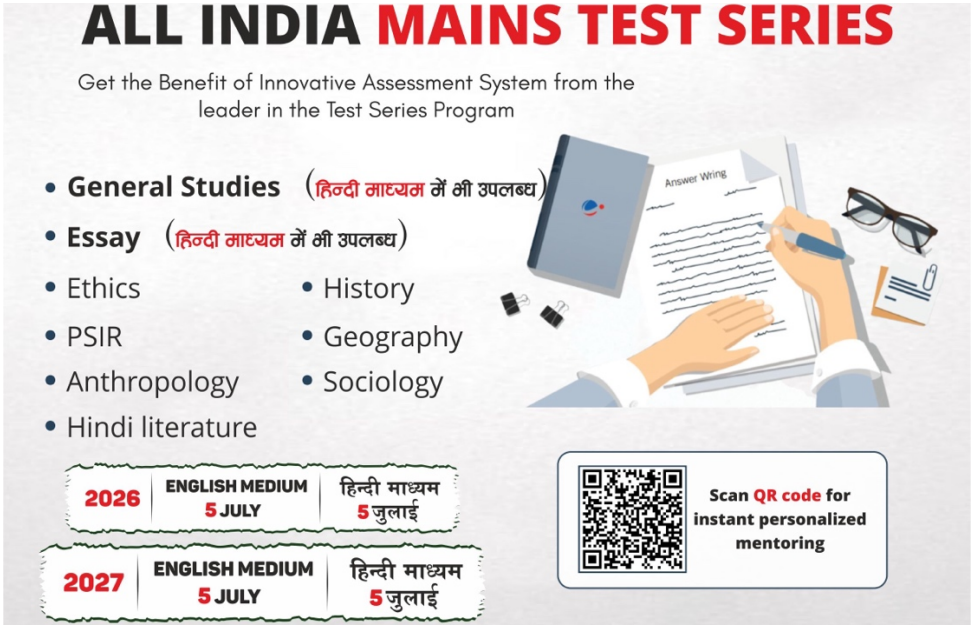
- **Enhanced Cognitive skills:** AI can help provide **personalized education** as opposed to "one-size-fits-all" education.
  - E.g. **AI-powered toys** like COSMO help boost children's creativity and **problem-solving skills.**
- **Reduces parent's burden:** AI can share **parenting responsibilities** (e.g. language learning, story-telling) alongside their **household and job commitments.**
- **Child's monitoring**: E.g. **Cubo Ai smart baby monitor,** sends alerts on the parent's phone about the baby.
- **Early Detection of Developmental Issues**: **AI diagnostic tools** can detect early signs of conditions like autism and ADHD. E.g. **Cognoa App** uses behavioural data to flag developmental concerns, enabling early intervention

Risks associated with AI in Parenting

- **Erosion of critical thinking:** By creating **dependency on AI.**
  - E.g. creation of **thought filter bubbles (**content suggestion**),** limit children's **self-expression.**
- **Social isolation:** Due to reducing **face-to-face bonding time**, potentially impeding **emotional regulation and empathy development.**
- **Privacy concerns**: Poorly designed or regulated, misused or hacked AI systems pose questions about **parental autonomy and digital exploitation** with the rise of **"data-assisted" parenting.**
- **Algorithmic Bias & Misinformation**: E.g. AI may favor **Western, middle-class parenting** while **undervaluing other cultural approaches** as it is trained on biased internet data**.**
- **Screen Dependence in Children:** Increasing AI-mediated interactions risk accelerating **screen addiction** among children which may lead to attention deficits, sleep disruption etc.

Conclusion

AI tools **offer benefits to both parents and children**; however, they also **pose risks and may create dependency** that weakens essential skills. Hence, they **should be used only as enablers** that **enhance the parent-child relationship**, never replace it.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1.8. MARRIAGE AT A GLANCE

Marriage

Marriage is a social institution providing social and legal sanction for the union of a man and a woman as partners.

Laws governing marriages in India

Hindu Marriage Act, 1955	Special Marriage Act, 1954	Personal Laws of different communities.	Prohibition of Child Marriages Act, 2006

Functions of marriage

Biological: Social recognition to sexual union and procreation.	**Social:** Legitimises couples, anchors family formation, structures life-cycle rituals from birth to death.	**Cultural and Religious:** Upholds marriage as a sacred institution through rituals and traditions.	**Legal and Economic:** Determines inheritance, kinship, and property rights.

Contemporary changes in institution of marriage

Structural

- **Delayed Marriages:** Due to education, careers, and individualism.
- **Inter-caste/Inter-faith Marriages:** Growing importance of education, class, and status; weakening caste endogamy. E.g. iimitimattrimony.com
- **Rising Divorce Rates:** Reduced stigma, increased remarriage (serial monogamy), and single-parent households.
- **Live-in Relationships:** Long-term cohabitation challenging traditional marriage.

Functional

- **Changed Functions:** Shift from procreation and gendered roles to emotional companionship; rise of DINK families.
- **Reduced Patriarchal Division of Labour:** Dual-income households dilute traditional gender roles.
- **Same-Sex Relationships:** Emphasize companionship and gender fluidity over procreation.

Factors behind changes in the institution of marriage

- **Economic:** Female economic independence delays marriage; rising material considerations foster consumerism and indirectly encourage dowry.
  - Mean age at marriage for women: 22.9 years (SRS 2023).
- **Cultural Shifts:** Liberal attitudes normalize cohabitation, same-sex unions, non-traditional families; rise of love-cum-arranged marriages reflects cultural hybridization.
- **Individualism:** Marriage increasingly based on personal fulfillment, compatibility, and choice.
- **Demographic Changes:** Ageing populations and declining fertility reshape marriage patterns.
- **Legal:** Safeguards for women and children; growing recognition of same-sex relationships globally.
- **Technology:** Matrimonial/dating platforms expand partner search beyond caste/community boundaries.

Types of Marriage

Monogamy: Union of 2 individuals; most legally recognized globally	**Polygamy:** Multiple spouses simultaneously; Hindu Marriage Act,1955 and Sec 82 of BNS prescribes punishment for bigamy; Assam passed the Assam Prohibition of Polygamy Bill, 2025 • **Polygyny:** One man, multiple wives • **Polyandry:** One women, multiple husbands	**Polyamory:** Increasing trend of concensual non-monogamy E.g. Open marriages

Conclusion

The institution of marriage will likely continue to evolve, reflecting greater diversity, inclusivity, and an ongoing redefinition of roles and relationships within the family unit.

1.8.1. LIVE-IN RELATIONSHIPS

Why in the News?

The Allahabad High Court reiterated that Live-in Relationship is not illegal, reinforcing a rights-based interpretation of Article 21, strengthening jurisprudence on personal liberty and human dignity.

Key Observation of Court on Live-In Relationship

- **Legality**: Live-in relationships between consenting adults are neither criminal nor prohibited under Indian law.
- **Autonomy**: Personal life choices of adults cannot be restricted on grounds of social or familial disapproval.
- **State Duty**: Denial of police protection in such cases constitutes a failure of constitutional obligation to protect life and liberty.
- **Social Morality**: Concerns about "social fabric" cannot override fundamental rights.
- **Evidentiary Presumption: Section 119(1) of the Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam, 2023** states that if a couple lives together for a significant period of time, they **shall be presumed to be married.**
    - Courts shall apply this presumption to protect the **rights of parties in a live-in relationship, particularly women and children** born out of such relationship**s.**

Live-in Relationships

- **Live-in Relationships** are when two individuals live together with consent (consensual cohabitation).
- **Drivers of Rise of Live-in Relationships**
    - **Compatibility Testing**: Seen as a phase to assess emotional, financial, and behavioral compatibility before a legal marriage.
    - **Career & Financial Independence:** High-pressure corporate jobs and dual-income structures encourage shared living expenses without immediate familial merging.
    - **Mitigating Divorce Stigma:** In a society where dissolving a marriage is legally tedious and socially painful, cohabitation offers a flexible alternative.
- **Challenges**: Social & Familial Ostracization, renting house is difficult due to frequent denial, face moral policing from neighbours or local authorities, etc.

Related Supreme Court Judgements

- **Lata Singh v. State of Uttar Pradesh (2006):** State must protect adults exercising partner choice; honour-based violence condemned.
- **K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India (2017):** Article 21 protects privacy, dignity, autonomy, and decisional freedom in intimate matters**.**
- **Shafin Jahan vs. Asokan K.M. And Others, (2018):** Right to marry a person of one's choice is integral to Article 21; expression of choice is protected under Articles 19 and 21.

Legal Framework

- **The Domestic Violence Act, 2005:** Covers relationships "in the nature of marriage," granting women rights to financial maintenance and protection from abuse.
- **Child Legitimacy:** Children born to live-in partners have a legal right to ancestral property and maintenance.
- **Uttarakhand's Uniform Civil Code (UCC):** Requires **official registration** of live-in relationships with the local authorities, failing to do so can lead to **criminal penalties.**
    - Seen as a move to **protect the partners,** critics argue that it is **infringement of privacy.**

Conclusion

The evolving recognition of live-in relationships reflects the Constitution's commitment to dignity, privacy and personal autonomy, requiring society and institutions to balance individual freedoms with adequate legal safeguards.

1.9. SOCIAL ORGANISATIONS AT A GLANCE

SOCIAL ORGANISATIONS

Lok Sabha Speaker emphasized role of **Social Organisations** in development of Nation and Society.

Social organization refers to the way individuals and groups are structured and interact within a society. It can be **formal** (e.g. **religious institutions, educational organisations, labour union**) or **informal** (e.g. **family, friends, peer groups**) in nature.

Role of Social Organizations in Nation Building

Social organizations drive **national progress** by operating where **state machinery** faces **structural limits** or **capacity shortages.**

Social Institutions and Role in Nation Building

Family	Religious Institution	Educational institution
Primary agent of socialization; inculcates **values, ethics,** and **social harmony.**	Promote **moral values, social cohesion, charity,** and **welfare.**	Impart **knowledge, skills, discipline, teamwork,** and **civic responsibility.**

Non-Government Organisations

- **Policy Advocacy:** E.g. **Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan**'s role in the **RTI act.**
- **Awareness & Capacity-Building:** E.g. **SEWA** (trade Union) on gender issues.
- **Improved Service delivery:** E.g. **Pratham** in education sector
- **Strengthening Democracy:** E.g. **Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR)** in **decriminalisation of politics**
- **Grassroots Innovation:** E.g. **SWaCH** (self-owned cooperative of marginalized waste-pickers) in Pune- sustainable waste management.

Conclusion

Social institutions shape individual lives and the **collective social, economic, and cultural fabric of society.** Strengthening them is essential for building **sustainable, inclusive,** and **resilient societies** capable of addressing **future challenges.**

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1.9.1. YOUTH'S ROLE IN NATION BUILDING

Why in the News?

At the **Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue (VBYLD) 2026**, the PM underscored the critical role of youth leadership in achieving **Viksit Bharat @2047.**

Role of youth in nation-building

Economic Growth

- **Demographic dividend:** India has the largest youth population with 50% under 25 years of age and 65% under 35.
- **Drivers of Innovation:** India is the world's third-largest startup hub, powered by youth-led ventures. **E.g.,** Youth-led Space start-ups **Skyroot or Agnikul Cosmos.**
- **Creative "Orange" Economy:** Driven largely by **youth creators,** the creative industry contributes $11 billion in exports and generates 8% of total employment**.**
  - **E.g., Sindhuja Rajamaran,** the world's youngest CEO running an animation company.
- **Scientific and Technological Prowess**: Young scientist **Dr. Satendra K Mangrauthia** won Vigyan Yuva Award for **Kamala**, India's first genetically edited rice varieties.

Political Accountability and Civic Engagement

- **Strengthening democracy:** Youth participation in voting, political engagement, civic awareness movements reinforce democratic values.
  - **E.g. Arya Rajendran** (India's youngest Mayor at 21 in Thiruvananthapuram)
- **Social Change Agents**: Youth lead Jan Bhagidari campaigns such as Swachh Bharat and Mission LiFE.
- **Civic Engagement**: The nature of youth civic engagement is fundamentally shifting as seen in the **2025 Nepal GenZ Protests** which led to the fall of the government over social media bans and corruption.

Unique Characteristics of Youth protests

- **Organizational Structure:** Decentralised, leaderless ("Be Water" strategy), flexibility makes it hard to dismantle. **E.g. Hong Kong Protests (2019)**
- **Technology:** Encrypted apps, VPNs, anonymity tools to evade surveillance. **E.g. Myanmar 2021** protests used VPN, bypassing ban on social media
- **Social Media Mobilization:** Viral hashtags, memes creating cross-national solidarity **E.g.** Rise of **Cockroach Janta Party,** Arab Spring
- **Hybrid Tactics: E.g. Hong Kong Protestors** used online planning + offline "Lennon Walls" for physical expression; **blank placards; flash mobs; symbolic art etc.**
- **Youth-Centric & Student Driven:** Gen Z sees themselves as **change agents**, more willing to confront authority compared to older generations. E.g. Student protests against Exam Leaks
- **Intersectional Issues**: Climate (FridaysForFuture), gender rights (Iran 2022), democracy (Belarus 2020).
- **Duration**: High impact but short-lived waves. E.g. Sri Lanka's Aragalaya 2022

Role of youth in civilian protests

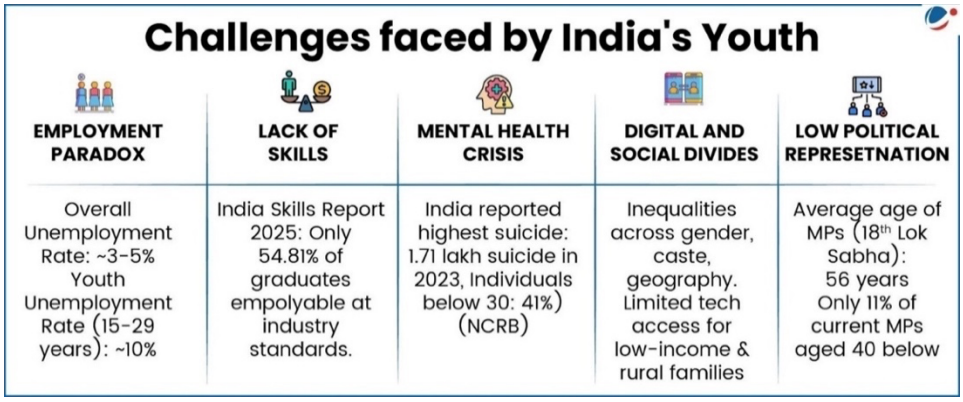
- **Decolonization:** India's Congress youth wings, revolutionary groups (Anushilan Samiti).
- **Civil rights**: E.g., US Civil Rights Movement, Vietnam War protests.
- **Democratic Rights:** E.g., **Belarus (2020)** Student protests against electoral fraud.
- **Good governance:** E.g., India against Corruption (2011) led to creation of Lokpal.

Initiatives for Youth

- **Draft National Youth Policy (NYP) 2025:** Ten-year vision focused on education, leadership, and social justice.
- **Meity's YUVAi (Youth for Unnati with AI):** AI learning for students (Classes 8–12)
- **Model Youth Gram Sabha:** Civic & governance exposure at Panchayati Raj

- **Health initiatives**: Fit India, Kashi Declaration (drug-free campaign)
- **PM SETU**: Upgrading Industrial Training Institutes for future-ready skills
- **Others:** Skill India Mission, Startup India, Agnipath scheme

Ways to leverage youth energy for national building


Challenges faced by India's Youth
EMPLOYMENT PARADOX
Overall Unemployment Rate: ~3-5% Youth Unemployment Rate (15-29 years): ~10%
LACK OF SKILLS
India Skills Report 2025: Only 54.81% of graduates empolyable at industry standards.
MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS
India reported highest suicide: 1.71 lakh suicide in 2023, Individuals below 30: 41%) (NCRB)
DIGITAL AND SOCIAL DIVIDES
Inequalities across gender, caste, geography. Limited tech access for low-income & rural families
LOW POLITICAL REPRESETNATION
Average age of MPs (18th Lok Sabha): 56 years
Only 11% of current MPs aged 40 below

- **Education and skills:** Align curricula with industry needs (NEP 2020); invest in AI, robotics, and green energy to future-proof the workforce.
  - **E.g. Colombia's Ruta N** innovation hub turned youth away from crime to catalyst of growth
- **Inclusive growth:** Expand skill centres to Tier-2/3 cities and rural areas; incentivise female workforce participation.
- **Civic engagement:** Create formal platforms for youth participation in governance, moving from apathy to active contribution.
- **Responsive governance:** Leverage digital platforms for dialogue and grievance redressal; counter misinformation while enabling civic participation.
  - **E.g. Cape Town's youth resilience strategy** integrating youth development.

Conclusion

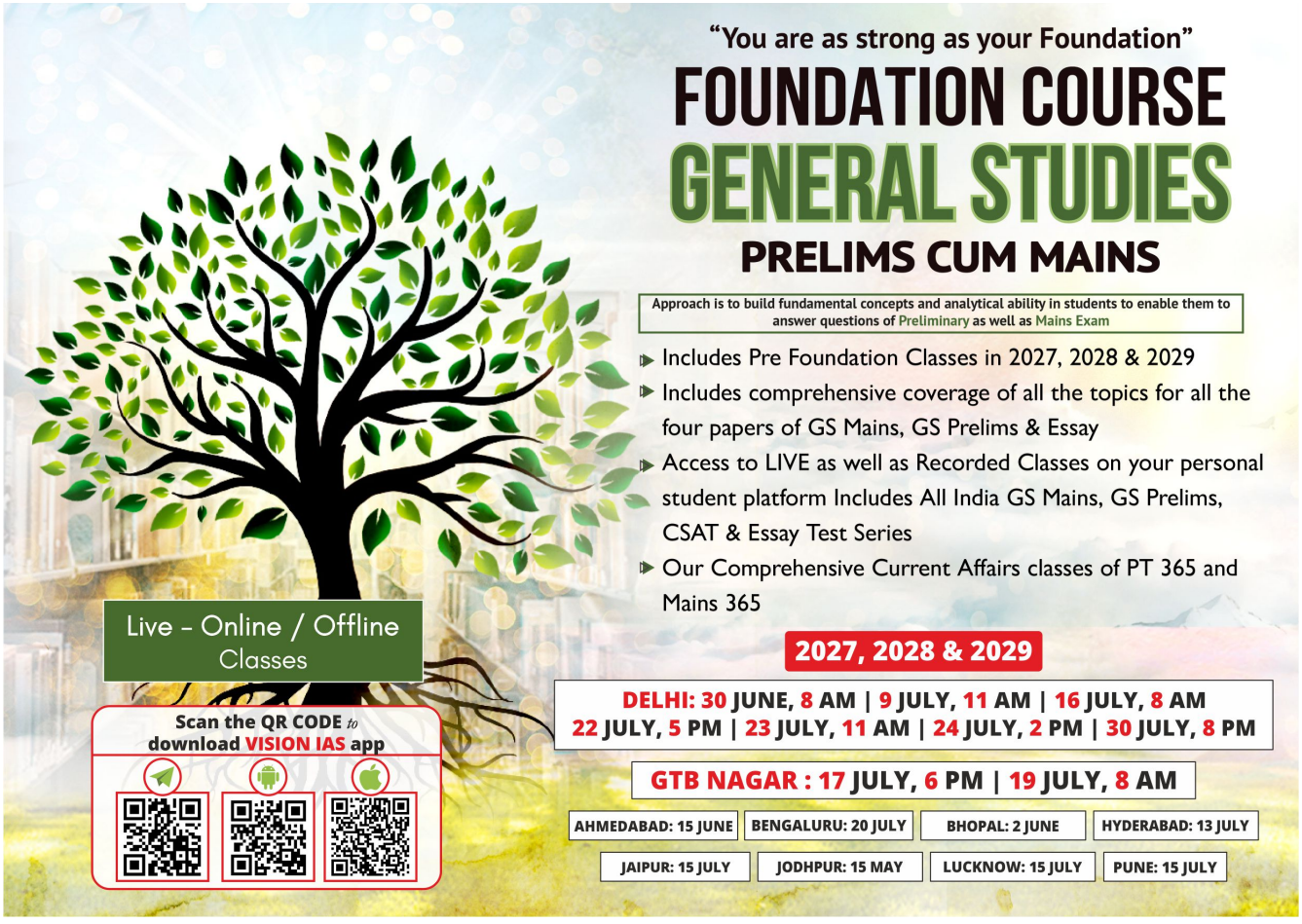
Youth are not merely the leaders of tomorrow but they are the disruptors, builders, and conscience of today. Channelling their energy through inclusive policy, meaningful participation, and responsive governance is the defining challenge of Viksit Bharat @2047.

1.10. KEYWORDS

Keywords				
Cultural Appropriation	Cultural erosion	Cultural Capital	Commodification of Culture	Social Isolation
Cognitive Decolonisation	Panchpran Pledge	middle-class vulnerability	Conspicuous Consumption	"K-shaped" economic growth
echo chambers	Democratizing AI Governance	"human-in-the-loop" approach	Algorithmic Bias	“data-assisted" parenting
Double-Income-No-Kid (DINK) families	Polygamy	Live-in Relationships	"Be Water" strategy	Youth Protests

1.11. PRACTICE QUESTION

The transition from human-mediated primary socialization to 'data-assisted' parenting is fundamentally altering community formation and identity among children." Elaborate. Discuss the risks associated with the growing integration of AI in modern families.			
Introduction	Body Part 1	Body Part 2	Conclusion
Introduce with exemplifying the growing use of AI and technology in family.	Explain how socialization and parenting are evolving with use of data and technology, can support with examples.	Enlist the risks such as social isolation and hyper-individualism associated with integration of AI in families and parenting.	Conclude with a balanced way forward, steps that can be taken by governments and families etc.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22 JULY, 5 PM | 23 JULY, 11 AM | 24 JULY, 2 PM | 30 JULY, 8 PM
GTB NAGAR : 17 JULY, 6 PM | 19 JULY, 8 AM
AHMEDABAD: 15 JUNE
BENGALURU: 20 JULY
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2. WOMEN

2.1. WOMEN-LED DEVELOPMENT

Why in the News?

While addressing the Women Empowerment Maha Sammelan organized on the **300th birth anniversary of Lokmata Devi Ahilya Bai**, PM said that government has made **Women-led Development the foundation of national progress**.

Women's Development vs. Women Led Development

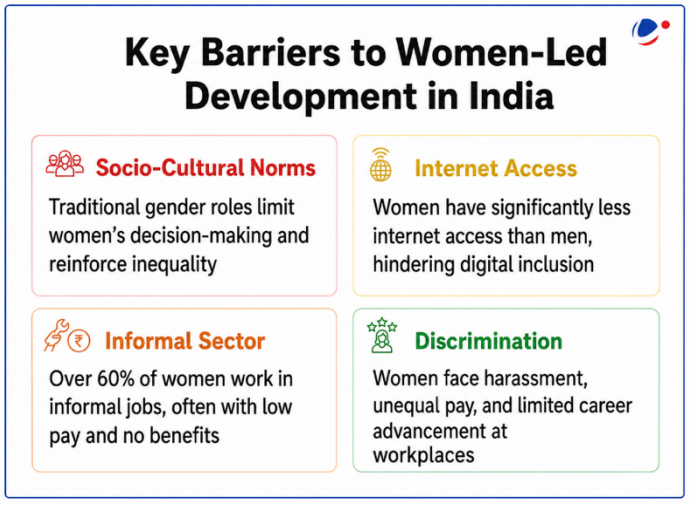
Aspect	Women's Development	Women-led Development
Core Philosophy	Women as passive recipients of welfare.	Women as active agents and drivers of change.
Primary Focus	Providing services to women.	Empowering women to lead development.
Role of Women	Beneficiaries needing support.	Change-makers and decision-makers.
Approach	Top-down delivery of schemes. e.g., Providing Shelter assistance	Bottom-up participation and leadership. e.g., Providing Property Entitlements

Significance of Women-led development to the society

- **Economic Empowerment**: Advancing gender equality could potentially lead to a 30% increase in India's GDP. (NFHS)
- **Gender equity:** Women in leadership positions can serve as role models and help shift societal norms about gender roles and capabilities.
  - **e.g.,** recent leadership of **Col. Sophia Qureshi** and **Wing Commander Vyomika Singh** in **Operation Sindoor**.
- **Inclusive growth:** It channelizes potential of women for actively shaping and driving economic, social, and political progress at all levels of governance.
  - >80% artisans in Khadi Sector are women, >50% of persons practicing sericulture are women.

India progress in women led development

- **Grassroot leadership: 46% of elected representatives** in local governments are women.
- **Education:** 43% of STEMM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics & Medicine) graduates in India are women.
- **Financial Empowerment**: 69% and 84% beneficiaries under Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY) and Stand Up India are women boosting women's entrepreneurship.


Key Barriers to Women-Led Development in India
Socio-Cultural Norms
Traditional gender roles limit women's decision-making and reinforce inequality
Internet Access
Women have significantly less internet access than men, hindering digital inclusion
Informal Sector
Over 60% of women work in informal jobs, often with low pay and no benefits
Discrimination
Women face harassment, unequal pay, and limited career advancement at workplaces

Steps taken for Women Led Development in India

- **Gender-responsive public investment:** FY26 features India's highest-ever gender budget at ₹5.01 lakh crore (9.37% of the Union Budget).
- **Women building rural economies:**
  - **Lakhpati Didi:** Over 3 crore rural women are actively progressing toward building sustainable, high-income livelihoods.
  - **NaMo Drone Didi Yojana:** Provides agricultural drones to 15,000 SHGs with an 80% subsidy, integrating women into the tech ecosystem.

- **Finance fuelling entrepreneurship**
  - **Financial Inclusion:** Women comprise **68% of the PM MUDRA loan** beneficiaries and hold **56% of all Jan Dhan accounts**.
  - **Stand-Up India:** Supported over **2 lakh women entrepreneurs** in launching greenfield enterprises.
  - **Start-Up India:** Has supported over **75,000 women-led startups.**
- **Skills, Innovation, & Leadership**
  - **Skilling Programs:** Women make up nearly 45% of **Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana** trainees.
- **Social Justice & Empowerment:** Abolition of **Triple Talaq** criminalizes instant divorce, ensuring dignity, equality for Muslim women.

Challenges in women-led development

- **Political:** Only 14% MPs in India are women.
- **Economic:** Low Female Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) (41.7% in 2023-24).
- **Social & Cultural Norms:** Patriarchal attitudes, safety concerns, early marriage, and unequal division of household responsibilities restrict women's public participation.
- **Digital divide:** Women who have ever used internet (15-49 years) doubled from 33% (NFHS-5) to 64.3% (NFHS-6 2023-24) but gender gap exists (80.5% men).

Initiatives by government for women-led development

- **Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, 2023,** was passed, reserving 33% seats for women in the Lok Sabha, State Assemblies
- **The 73rd and 74th constitutional amendment act of 1992** reserved 33% of seats in local government institutions for women.
- **Tirupati Resolution on women-led development (2025):** Adopted at First National Conference of Parliamentary & Legislative Committees on Women Empowerment, calling for gender-lens governance, gender-responsive budgeting, bridging the digital divide, and promoting women in STEM.
- **Mission Shakti:** aims to enhance women's safety, through One-Stop Centres (OSCs) providing police, medical, and legal aid.
  - **SANKALP** (Supportive Action for Nurturing and Knowledge-Based Advancement, Last-Mile Delivery and Potential Realisation of Women): HEW **(Hub for Empowerment of Women)**
- **Educational and social empowerment** via Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) scheme to promote girl child education and counter discrimination.

Conclusion

Shifting to women-led development transforms women from passive beneficiaries into active change-makers, driving India's inclusive economic growth and national progress.

2.2. GLOBAL GENDER GAP 2025

Why in the News?

The **Global Gender Gap Report 2025** was released by the **World Economic Forum (WEF).**

About Global Gender Gap Index

- Introduced in 2006; Measures gender parity across four dimensions: **Economic opportunities, Education, Health and Political leadership.**
- Parity **score of 1 indicates full parity** and **0 denotes complete inequality**.
- **Gender Gap: The difference between women and men** as reflected in social, political, intellectual, cultural, or economic attainments or attitudes.

Key Findings of Report

- **India:** Ranked **131st** out of 148 countries (down from 129 in 2024), though score improved to 0.644.
- **South Asia:** Bangladesh (24), Nepal (125), Sri Lanka (130), Bhutan (119); all ahead of India.
- **Global: Iceland** topped for 16th year. **Global Gender gap is over 30%;** full parity may take **123 years.**

India's Overall Performance (2025)

- **Economic Participation and Opportunity:** Performance **improved;** economic participation rose marginally by 0.9% to **40.7%.**
- **Educational Attainment:** India scored **97.1%,** showing **gains in female literacy and higher education.**
- **Health and Survival: Higher parity** due to **improved sex ratio at birth and life expectancy,** despite overall decline in life expectancy.
- **Political Empowerment: Parity dropped by 0.6 points. Share of female MPs declined** from **14.7% to 13.8%;** share of women ministers fell from 6.5% to 5.6%.

Major Challenges for India to achieving Gender Parity

- **Social**:
  - **Education: Female literacy rate** (**65.46%) is lower** than that for **male** (82.14%) and the country average (74.04%)**. (Census 2011)**
  - **Child Marriage:** Prevalence of child marriage was **23.3% during 2019-21**. (**NFHS-5**)
  - **Women Safety:** More than **13.13 lakh girls and women went missing** in India between 2019 and 2021 (NCRB).
  - **Psychological:** Number of deaths by **suicide for women increased by 4.6%** (2014-2020) (NCRB).
  - **Others**: Digital divide, Patriarchal norms, inequalities related to caste, minorities, regional, tribal identities etc
- **Economic**:
  - **Double Burden**: **Women's unpaid care work equals 15–17% of GDP**. Women of working age **spend 5.6 hours on unpaid work** daily **(~6X more** than men- 30 minutes**).** (Time Use Survey-NSO).
  - **Unorganized sector**: **~97%** of the women workforce is involved in the unorganized sectors, majorly in agriculture.
- **Health:**
  - **Prevalence of Anaemia**: Nearly 57% of Indian women aged 15-49 years are anaemic, reducing their ability to learn, work, or carry pregnancies safely. (NFHS-5)
  - **Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR):** 87 (SRS 2024), higher than **UN SDG target** of **70 by 2030.**
  - **Reproductive Health:** ~50 million women in India suffer from reproductive health problems.
- **Political Participation**: Decreased as per the report.

Initiatives taken by Government towards empowering women

- **Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam**: Aims for **reservation of one-third of the total seats** in the Lok Sabha, the state legislative assembles for women.
- **POSHAN Abhiyaan:** To improve nutritional outcomes for children, adolescent girls.
- **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) Scheme:** A social campaign addressing the declining Child Sex Ratio and empowering girls and women.
- **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY):** Conditional cash transfer scheme providing maternity benefits to pregnant women and lactating mothers.
- **One Stop Centre (OSC):** Integrated support and assistance under one roof to women affected by violence and those in distress.
- **Women Helpline (181):** 24x7 emergency and non-emergency response for women.

Conclusion

Despite decades of progress, efforts like expanding women's participation in the workforce, strengthening leadership pipelines, improving skills-to-work transitions, enhancing policy implementation, and ensuring inclusive outcomes in global trade is needed to ensure improvement in Gender parity.

2.3. DOWRY IN INDIA

Why in the News?

The Supreme Court (SC) provided directions in **State of U.P. vs Ajmal Beg Case, 2025** to tackle dowry evil and enforce prohibition through the **Dowry Prohibition Act (DPA), 1961**.

About Dowry in India

- Dowry is "**any property or valuable security given or agreed to be given** either directly or indirectly, **by one party to a marriage to the other party to the marriage**, at or before or any time after the marriage" (DPA, 1961).
- **Current Status (as per NCRB Crime in India 2024 report)**
  - **Crime against women:** Of 4,41,534 cases 27.2% cases were registered under **'Cruelty by Husband or Relatives'.**
  - India recorded **5,737 dowry deaths in 2024.**
  - **Nearly 16 women died every day** due to dowry-related violence.
  - **Uttar Pradesh** reported the highest number of cases (2,038), followed by Bihar and Madhya Pradesh.

Causes for rising Dowry and related Crime in India

- **Social Status:** Dowry has become a means of **displaying social status i.e., "grand weddings", luxury items,** etc. With rising aspirational lifestyles, marriage becomes a platform for conspicuous consumption, pushing dowry demands upwards.
- **Financial Security**: Dowry is also seen as a measure of financial security for the bride, as a **safety net in times of economic hardship.**
- **Weak deterrence:** Judicial delays in handling dowry cases, underreporting due to corruption, social pressure, and inadequate victim support contributes to **weak implementation of laws**.
  - 58225 dowry death cases are pending trial from previous year (NCRB 2024) pendency percentage of court trials is 93.6%; 46.2% conviction rate
- **Marriage as a Transaction:** Groom's education/job is often treated as an asset, encouraging **demand-side dowry**.
- **Social pressure:** Families may keep paying dowry instalments after marriage due to **fear of social stigma around separation/divorce; concern for children**; maintain family honour etc.
- **Lack of Awareness and Education**: About legal implications and protections available to them.

Legal Provisions

- **Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961:** Criminalizes the act of giving, taking, or demanding dowry.
- **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS): Section 80** (formerly Section 304B of the IPC) strictly **penalizes dowry deaths,** while **Section 85** (earlier IPC Section 498A) addresses **cruelty by a husband or his relatives.**
- **Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005:** Enacted to protect women from domestic violence.
- **Evidentiary Backing: Section 118 of the Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam (BSA)** (previously Section 113B of the Evidence Act, 1872) raises a **presumption of guilt against the accused.**

Judicial Pronouncements related to Dowry

- **Rajbir v. State of Haryana (2010)**: Supreme Court issued mandatory direction to all trial courts to **add Section 302 IPC (now Section 103 BNS) in every dowry death case**, unless evidence clearly indicates otherwise.
- **Satvir Singh v. State of Punjab (2001)**: SC held that **any property demanded or given "in connection with marriage" falls within ambit of dowry**, irrespective of when it is demanded.

Way Forward

- **Directions of Supreme Court in State of U.P. vs Ajmal Beg, 2025 Case**
  - **Appointment of Dowry Prohibition Officers (DPOs):** DPOs are appointed by State Governments under the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961. Their contact details must be widely publicised.
  - **Expeditious Disposal of Pending Cases:** High Courts are requested to **take stock of the number of pending cases** for disposal.
  - **Training for Officials:** Police and judicial officers should **periodically receive training** ensuring sensitivity toward genuine cases while identifying those that may be frivolous.

- **Other:** Grassroots Awareness Programs by district administration, change in education curriculum for awareness about this evil practice etc.

- **SC guidelines in Arnesh Kumar v. State of Bihar (2014): Prohibit automatic or routine arrests** by the police for offenses punishable by less than 7 years of imprisonment, such as **dowry harassment.** It outlines the procedure to ensure that the **legal provisions are not misused.**
- **Social norms:** Dowry is sustained by **social acceptance**. Therefore, village committees, Residential Welfare Associations, religious leaders and youth groups can create social sanctions against dowry and reward dowry free marriages (certification, public recognition).

Conclusion

Dowry is not merely a legal but a socio-economic problem rooted in the institution of patriarchy and marriage. Hence, the solution requires a "**4P approach**" i.e. **Punishment** (deterrence), **Protection** (victim support), **Prevention** (social norm change), and **Promotion** of women's empowerment.

2.4. MANOSPHERE

Why in the News?

UN Women has warned that a growing network of online communities known collectively as the "manosphere" is emerging as a serious **threat to gender equality**.

What is Manosphere?

- **Definition**: The **manosphere** encompasses online communities promoting narrow, aggressive definitions of masculinity and the false narrative that feminism has harmed men's rights.
  - These communities equate male worth with **emotional control, material wealth, physical appearance, and dominance** over women.
- **Purpose:** Rooted in misogyny & anti-feminist rhetoric, the manosphere weaponizes digital platforms to spread hate, misogyny, and reinforce gender bias.

Causes of rise of Manosphere

- **Increased access to internet:** Enabled access to social media and manosphere influencers online.
  - Total internet subscribers in India increased from 251 million (2014) to **1028.61 million** (2025).
- **Manosphere influencers**: Self-proclaimed lifestyle coaches attract young men by teaching personal responsibility while **portraying** them as **victims of societal misandry** (prejudice against men).
- **Algorithm influence**: **"Watch next" algorithms** amplify sexist and anti-feminist content such as **AWALT: "All women are like that"** ideology.
- **Insecurities and validation needs**: Social isolation due to nuclear families, individualism and desire for belonging drive young men toward the manosphere, seeking support and validation.
- **Growing conservatism**: UN Women studies show younger men hold more stereotypical gender views than older men.
- **Digital anonymity**: Reduces social and legal consequences, enabling easier spread of misogyny and hatred. E.g. Cyber violence

Negative impacts of the manosphere

- **Increased misogyny**: E.g., **Gamergate** harassment campaign against female gamers.
- **Normalized violence**: E.g. Studies show 16-58% of women and girls face **online violence**.
  - Growing mobilization of **"incels"** (self-identified "involuntary celibates"), promoting racism, misogyny, anti-feminism, and homophobia.
- **Societal harm**: Gender inequality hurts both men and women. Men with restrictive gender attitudes are more likely to engage in risky behaviors, substance abuse, depression, and suicidal thoughts.
- **Men's mental health impacts**: November's survey shows manosphere exposure reduces men's confidence, leading to feelings of worthlessness, and decreased mental health prioritization.
- **Reversing gender equality**: Manosphere stereotypes promote myths that hold women back.

Existing mechanisms to tackle manosphere

- **World**
  - **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995):** Calls for balanced & non-stereotypical portrayals of women in digital spaces.
  - **'Making All Spaces Safe' Initiative (UNFPA):** To combat technology-facilitated gender-based violence.
  - **EU's Digital Services Act:** Prohibits misogynistic & gender-based hate content on digital platforms.
- **India**
  - **Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986:** Outlaws indecent/derogatory portrayal of women in digital media.
  - **IT Rules, 2021:** Requires social media to remove objectionable content within 24 hours of complaint.
  - **Digital Shakti: By National Commission for Women (NCW)** for digitally empowering women & girls in cyberspace.
  - **Online Harassment and Cyber Bullying against women**: Criminalized under **Bhartiya Nyaya Samhita** (Section 75, 78, 79), **Information Technology (Amendment) Act,** 2008 (Section 67A).

Way Forward

- **Legal measures:** E.g. Online Safety Act of UK; making sites and apps accountable.
- **Promoting media literacy and digital resilience.**
- **Rights-based response suggested by UN Women: Support survivors** of online abuse, Youth-focused programming promoting gender equality.
- **Promoting anti-manosphere content creators:** E.g. HeForShe supports men leaving the manosphere.

Conclusion

To constructively tackle the issues of the Manosphere, it is important to fill the systemic gap of **lack of healthy spaces where men can openly address mental health, economic insecurity, and masculinity**. There is a need for collaborative efforts from **platforms and policymakers** to address the algorithmic and regulatory loopholes that promote extremist ideologies.

2.5. VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AT A GLANCE

Violence Against Women

Key Data and Facts

4.41 lakh crimes against women **(NCRB 2024)**	Cruelty by husband/ relatives **(27.2%)**, kidnapping/abduction **(15.4%)**, POCSO) Act cases **(15.4%)**.	**15,489** cases registered under the Dowry Prohibition Act. **(2023)**	Technology Facilitated Violence against Women and Girls **(TFVAWG):** prevalence **(16–58%)**	**44%** women globally lack legal protection against digital violence **(UN Women 2024)**

Reasons for Violence against Women

Patriarchy, power imbalance due to male domination E.g. economic dependency	**Gender inequality and Stereotypes** E.g. Objectification, victim blaming	**Impunity**, lack of accountability of persons in authority, lack of support services	**Lack of awareness,** education and empowerment of women	**Cultural acceptance and justification** E.g. dressing "provocatively"

Legal provisions related to violence against women

Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) **Act, 1986**	Immoral Traffic (Prevention) **Act, 1956**	The Dowry Prohibition Act, **1961**
Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition of Sex Selection) **Act, 1994**	The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence **Act, 2005**	The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) **Act, 2013**

Initiatives to curb violence against Women

- **Chapter-V** of the **Bhartiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS):** Offences against women and children
- **'Mission Shakti'** with its two sub-schemes –
  - **'Sambal'** (women safety): One Stop Centre (**OSC**), Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Nari Adalats, etc.
  - **'Samarthya'** (women empowerment): Ujjwala, Swadhar Greh Working Women Hostel, Creches.
- **Sexual Harassment electronic Box (SHe-Box):** Online platform for sexual harassment complaints.
- **Nirbhaya Fund:** Dedicated non-lapsable fund for women's safety.
- **Project Stree Manoraksha (NIMHANS)** for Psychosocial Support
- **NGOs:** Invisible Girl Project (stop Female gendercide), Shakti Vahini

International Measures

- UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women **(CEDAW, 1979)**
- UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women **(1993)**
- Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action **(BPfA)**
- 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development **(SDG 5)**
- **UN Spotlight Initiative:** By UN and EU to ensure all women are free from violence.
- **SheLeads II (UN Women):** Builds women's capacity for public and political leadership, participation.
- **UN Agreed Conclusions:** Global framework to improve women's and girls' access to justice.
- **Italy:** Enacted a law recognizing femicide as gender-motivated killing.

2.5.1. PROTECTION OF WOMEN FROM DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ACT, 2005

Why in the News?

The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (PWDVA), 2005 has completed **20 years**.

About the PWDV Act, 2005

As a signatory to **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW),** India required to legislate against domestic violence, recognizing it as a violation of human rights.

- **Aim**: To ensure the fundamental rights of women guaranteed under **Articles 14, 15 and 21.**

Key provisions of the Act

- **Wide definition of Domestic Violence (DV):** Includes actual abuse or threat of abuse including **physical, sexual, emotional, verbal, and economic abuse.**
  - **Harassment by way of unlawful dowry demands** also constitutes DV.
- **Scope:** Applies to all women in **domestic relationships- marriage, live-in relationships, familial ties, and shared households.**
- **Rights of Women:**
  - Right to reside in **shared household (irrespective of ownership).**
  - Provides **temporary custody of child.**
  - **Reliefs**: **Protection orders** to prevent domestic violence, **Monetary Orders** for maintenance for herself and her Children, and **Compensation order** for damages caused.
- **Institutional Framework**
  - **Protection Officers:** A**ssist victims,** coordinate support, provide **legal aid**, **report cases of DV to the Magistrate** upon receipt of complaints and **ensure enforcement** of orders.
  - **Service Providers:** NGOs to provide **counselling, shelter, medical assistance, legal help.**
  - **Government Duties**: Promote **awareness, training, and coordination** among stakeholders.
- **Procedure and Enforcement**
  - **Time-bound justice**: Woman victim can get immediate civil remedies within 60 days.
  - **Evidence:** Sole testimony of the aggrieved woman is admissible as proof, easing the burden on the victim.
  - **Penalties:** Breach of court orders **punishable with imprisonment/fine**.

Significance

- **Judicial Expansion of Scope of Protection:** E.g. **extending protection to women in live-in relationships (D. Velusamy v D. Patchaiammal, 2010)** and removing gender-specific restrictions on who can be named as respondents (Hiralal P. Harsora v. Kusum Harsora, 2016).
- **Decline in Registered DV Cases:** From **507 cases** in **2021** to **468 in 2022**. **(NCRB)**
  - **Reduction in spousal violence (**18-49 years) from 29.2% (NFHS-5, 2019–20) to 22.3% (NFHS-6, 2023-24).
- **Recognition of Women's Rights and Cultural Shift:** By framing domestic violence **as a serious social and legal issue** rather than a **private family matter,** the Act has helped drive a **cultural shift**.
- **Civil Remedies:** PWDVA offers civil remedies focused on safety such as **protection orders, residence rights, and maintenance**.
- **Other achievements: Legal recognition of diverse forms of abuse** beyond physical cruelty and dowry harassment; **enhanced accessibility through multiple avenues**.

Challenges in implementation

- **Low Conviction Rate**: Conviction rate for cruelty by husband/relatives is ~18% (NCRB 2022).
- **Judicial and Legal Limitations:** Challenges in **evidence collection and documentation** makes **enforcement difficult**.
- **Socio-Cultural Barriers:** Deep-rooted patriarchal mindsets normalizing DV as a private family matter and social stigma linked to divorce or separation, discourage women from seeking help.

- **High Incidence despite Legal Safeguards**: 'Cruelty by Husband or Relatives' was the leading category of crimes against women, with 27.2% cases. (NCRB 2024)
- **Other challenges:**
  - **Inadequate training and understaffing of Protection Officers**.
  - **Limited availability of shelter homes and service providers**, especially in rural areas.
  - **Insensitive handling of cases** by police officers.
  - **Gender-specific approach** that excludes male victims.

Key measures taken by Indian Government for tackling DV

- **One Stop Centre (OSC):** Under Mission Shakti Umbrella Scheme, providing integrated assistance to women affected by violence/in distress.
- **Emergency Response Support System (ERSS-112)**: Computer aided dispatch of field/ police resources in all States/UTs.
- **Nirbhaya Fund:** Training for police, prosecutors and medical officers.
- **SC Judgements: In Satish Ahuja v. Sneha Ahuja (2021) and Prabha Tyagi v. Kamlesh Devi (2022),** SC upheld and broadened right of domestic violence victim to reside in a shared household.
- **Other:** Women Help Desks (WHDs) at Police Stations; Women Helpline (181, 1091) etc.

Way Forward

- **Strengthen training** for Protection Officers for improved victim support and accountability.
- **Sensitize and expand women-focused police units** to enhance reporting and trust.
- **Increase shelter homes and rehabilitation programs** with holistic survivor support.
- **Promote women's education, economic empowerment, and community engagement** to dismantle patriarchal mindsets.
- **Amend laws for** female perpetrators and expand rehabilitation frameworks.
- **Leverage government schemes** (like STEP programme) to enhance survivor independence.

Conclusion

Two decades later, the **PWDVA stands as both a milestone and a mirror**. It reflects the progress India **has made in recognising women's rights** and **the long road ahead** in dismantling **the social, economic, and cultural barriers** that keep women trapped in violent homes.

2.5.2. SEXUAL HARASSMENT OF WOMEN AT WORKPLACE

Why in the News?

The Supreme Court, in **Yogamaya M.G. v. State of Kerala 2025 case**, upheld that political parties **cannot be** treated as "workplaces" excluding them from **Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 (POSH Act).**

About POSH Act 2013

- **Judicial precedent**: Based on **Vishaka judgement 1997.**
- **Scope**: Applies to all workplaces: government, private sector, NGOs, educational institutions, hospitals, sports facilities, etc.
  - Covers domestic workers as well.
- **Internal Complaints committee (ICC)**: Mandatory in every workplace with 10 or more employees.
  - At least 50% of members and presiding officer shall be women.
- **Local complaints committee (LCC):** In each district to deal with complaints in workplace with less than 10 employees.
- **Complaint:** To be made within a period of 3 months from the date of incident to ICC or LCC which are to complete inquiry within 90 days.

Sexual Harassment at Workplace

- **Definition:** It refers to any unwelcome sexual advance, demand for sexual favors, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature that occurs at workplace. (POSH Act)
- **Forms of Sexual Harassment at Workplace:**
  - **Quid Pro Quo:** Seeking sexual favors or advances in exchange for work benefits such as promises of promotion, higher pay, etc.
  - **Hostile Work Environment:** Subjecting employees to pervasive unwanted sexual behavior that creates an offensive, intimidating, or abusive workplace. E.g., sexual jokes, inappropriate touching, etc.

Impact of Sexual Harassment at Workplace		
On Individuals:	**On Workplace**	**On Economy and Society**
• Unsafe and hostile work environment leads to career disruptions for women. • Health Impacts: Stress, anxiety, depression, Reduced self-esteem and loss of confidence • Violation of Fundamental rights (Article 14, 15, 21)	• **Toxic Work Culture:** Normalisation of inappropriate behaviour. • **Decline in Productivity:** Decline in employee morale and efficiency. • **Reputational Damage:** Loss of public trust and goodwill.	• **Lower Female Labour Force Participation:** Reinforces occupational segregation. • **Perpetuating gender inequality:** Restricts women's access to opportunities and economic empowerment.

Way Forward

- **Strengthening Implementation of the POSH Act:** Audits ensuring that companies set up ICCs and introducing stricter penalties for failing to comply. LCCs should be made more accessible to women in informal sector.
- **Promoting Gender Equality at Workplace:** Gender diversity in senior positions helps dismantle patriarchal structures and reduces the occurrence of harassment.
- **Collaboration with Civil Society:** In educating and empowering women, especially in informal sector.
- **Recommendations of Justice Hema Committee** (sexual harassment of women in the Malayalam film industry):
  - **Characterisation of Women in cinema:** Depicting women holding powerful positions like Civil Servant etc.
  - **Gender Awareness Training Program:** Challenging the patriarchal mindset; projecting gender equality.
  - **Redefining Masculinity and Femininity:** Masculinity to be equated to justice, equality, and compassion instead of violence and aggression. Femininity to be divorced from passiveness and silent suffering.
  - **Creation of a Welfare Fund:** To support women in job break due to childbearing or other responsibilities.

Conclusion

Safe workplace for women is essential for women's rights, career growth, and societal progress. Strengthening POSH Act implementation, promoting gender equality, and fostering inclusive work cultures are essential for creating safer, more equitable professional environments for all.

2.6. BETI BACHAO BETI PADHAO (BBBP) INITIATIVE

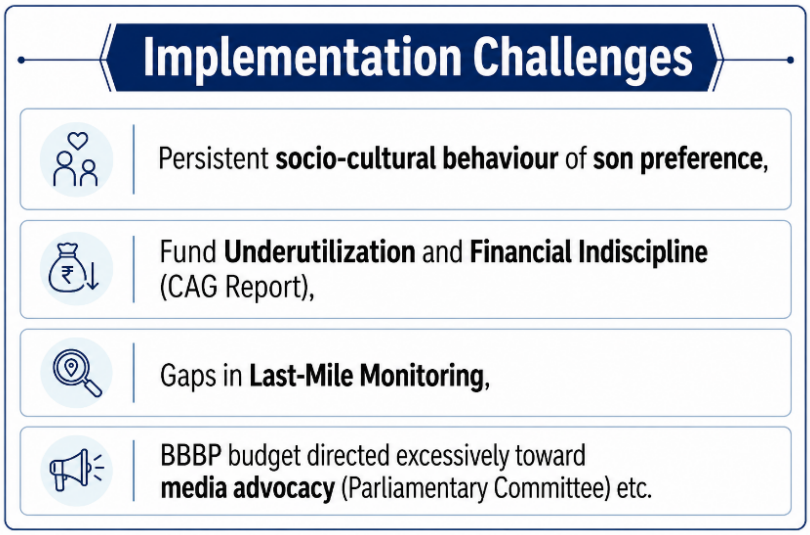
Why in the News?

The Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) campaign has completed 11 years, driving behavioural change and girl child empowerment.

Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) Initiative

- **Launched in: 2015**

- **Type: Centrally sponsored scheme** with 100% funding by the Central Government under **Sambal** vertical of **Mission Shakti.**
- **Aim**: To address the **declining Child Sex Ratio (CSR), prevent gender-biased sex-selective elimination and promote the survival, protection and education of the girl child**.
- **Ministry**: Joint initiative of Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD), Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) and Ministry of Education (MoE).
- **Key Objectives**
  - Improving **Sex Ratio at Birth (SRB)** by two points every year.
  - Improvement in the percentage of **institutional deliveries** or sustained at the rate of **95% or above**.
  - 1% increase in 1st Trimester **Ante-Natal Care (ANC)** Registration per year.
  - 1% increase in enrolment at **secondary education** level and skilling of girls/women per year.
  - To check **dropout rate among girls** at secondary and higher secondary levels.
  - Raising awareness about safe **Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM).**


Implementation Challenges
Persistent socio-cultural behaviour of son preference,
Fund Underutilization and Financial Indiscipline (CAG Report),
Gaps in Last-Mile Monitoring,
BBBP budget directed excessively toward media advocacy (Parliamentary Committee) etc.

- **Scheme Components:** Gender-Critical District Interventions in 640 districts, Advocacy campaigns addressing declining CSR and SBR, **Sukanya Samriddhi scheme** (financial incentive).
- **Multi-sectoral approach**: involving health, education, child development, and community awareness.
- **Key Developments/Impact**
  - **Sex Ratio at Birth (SRB)** has increased from 918 in 2014-15 to **929 in 2024-25**. (Health Management Information System (HMIS) of MoHFW)
  - **Gross enrolment ratio of girls** at **secondary** education level has increased from 75.51% in 2014-15 to **80.2% in 2024-25. (UDISE)**
  - **Institutional deliveries rose from 61% in 2014-15 to over 97.3% by 2023-24**
  - **Awareness Campaigns E.g. 'Selfie with Daughters' and 'Beti Janmotsav' to celebrate the birth of girl child**

Conclusion

One daughter brings as much happiness as 10 sons – Skanda Purana. The BBBP Initiative has made significant progress in improving the lives of girls in India. There is a need to ensure long-term changes through inclusive policies, better implementation, and active community participation. This will ensure continued progress toward gender equality and empowerment.

2.7. WOMEN AT WORKPLACE AT A GLANCE

Women at Workplace

Key Data and Facts

Women's Employment Rate (WPR) grew from 22% (2017-18) to 40.3% (2023-24). (PLFS)
- Unemployment rate dipped from 5.6% to 3.2 % in the same period.
- Female employment grew by 96% in rural areas and by 43% in urban areas.

Financial Access: Women received 68% of MUDRA loans and form 44% of PM SVANidhi beneficiaries.

Entrepreneurship: Female self-employment increased by 30% (2017-18 to 2023-24).
- Women-led MSMEs almost doubled (2010-11 to 2023-24), generating ~89 lakh jobs for women

Leadership: ~50% of DPIIT-registered startups have at least one woman director.

Barriers for Women at Workplace

Entry Barriers: Hiring biases and occupational stereotyping; women hold ~33% of entry-level private-sector jobs (McKinsey, 2025).

Retention Barriers: Safety, marriage drive attrition.
- **Maternity Penalty:** ~75% working mothers face career setbacks due to inadequate workplace support;
- **Weak Safeguards:** Non-functional POSH Local Committees, especially in unorganized sector. (Parliamentary Committee)

Growth Barriers: Pay gaps, digital exclusion, limited access to leadership and informal networks.

Unpaid Care Work: Women perform 76% of unpaid care work, constraining formal workforce participation.

Laws and Initiatives

Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013	Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maandhan (PM-SYM) Scheme	Palna Scheme Under Mission Shakti	Lakhpati Didi Initiative and Namo Drone Didi Yojana

Way Forward (Lifecycle Approach to Gender Parity by NITI Aayog-CII report)

Promoting Entry
Strategy: Gender-Neutral recruitment Practices, Blind Screening and Targeted Outreach.
Global & Indian Best Practices: Capgemini & Unilever: Use AI tools in job descriptions to eliminate bias.

Enabling Retention
Strategy: Inclusive Parental Leave, Flexible Work Models, Equal Pay and workplace childcare facilities.
Global & Indian Best Practices:
- **Netflix:** Offers unlimited parental leave.
- **New Zealand:** Equal Pay Amendment Act ensures pay equity across sectors.
- **Spain:** Offers 16 weeks of parental leave to both parents.
- **Denmark:** Guarantees universal subsidized childcare.

Ensuring Growth
Strategy: Structured mentoring, Upskilling and reskilling.
Global & Indian Best Practices:
- Programs like PropelHER and SheLeads Coach women in negotiation and strategy.
- Tata and Accenture run returnship programs for women post child birth.

Building Inclusive Culture
Strategy: Organisations with strong Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) are 3.8 times more productive.
Global & Indian Best Practices: Tech Mahindra & Genpact: Maintain significant female representation among Board of Directors.

Conclusion

Ensuring 70% female workforce participation is identified as a critical pillar for achieving the target of a $30 trillion economy and the vision of Viksit Bharat by 2047. Meeting this milestone requires adding an estimated 145 million women into the mainstream national workforce.

2.8. WOMEN IN STEM

Why in the News?

National Science Day 2026 was celebrated with the theme **"Women in Science: Catalyzing Viksit Bharat,"** highlighting the critical role of women in **Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM).**

Historical Evolution of Women in Science in India

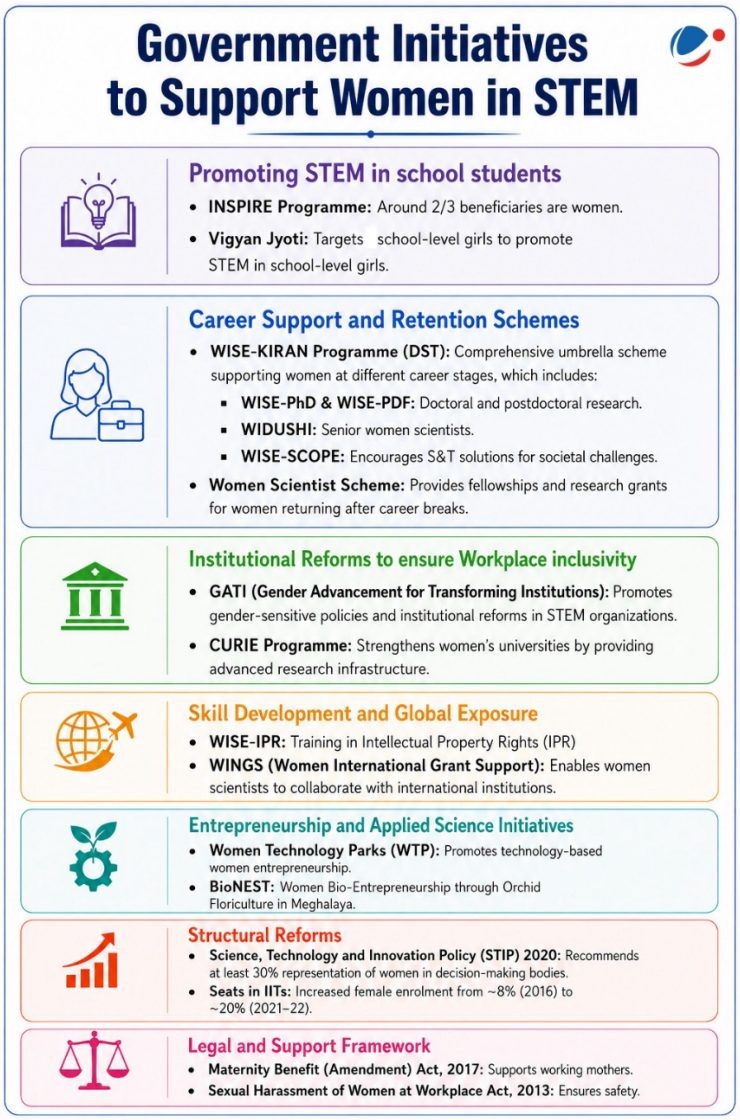
- **Historical:** From Vedic scholar **Gargi Vachaknavi** to mathematician **Lilavati,** women contributed to science in ancient and medieval India.
- **Colonial Period:** 19th century **social reform movements** and spread of **modern education enabled women** to **enter primarily in fields like medicine and teaching.**
  - However, their **participation remained limited** to urban and privileged sections.
- **Early 20th Century:** Women began entering **formal scientific institutions and research careers**, marking a transition from **education to professional science roles**. **Examples:**
  - **Kamala Sohonie** (first Indian woman to earn a PhD in a scientific discipline 1939).
- **Post-Independence: 42.7%** of total female STEM graduates are from India. (All India Survey on Higher Education).

Status of women in STEM

- **Increasing Presence in Strategic Fields: E.g. Tessy Thomas** (led Agni missile programme; DRDO scientist 2011).
- **Women in Leadership roles in Scientific Institutions: e.g. Sanghamitra Bandyopadhyay** (first woman Director of Indian Statistical Institute 2015).

Challenges Faced by Women in STEM (CSIR survey, 2024)

- **Socio-Cultural Barriers:** The **dual/triple burden of work, family, and social roles** leads to time poverty and career discontinuity.
  - Female STEM enrolment rose to 42.6% (2021-22), with India contributing 42.7% of global female STEM graduates, yet only 27% of the STEM workforce is female.
- **Educational Barriers:** Limited access to quality education, especially in rural/poor regions.
  - **Gender gap in elite institutions** (e.g., lower female representation in IITs/IIMs).
- **Institutional Bias: ~44% women reported being overlooked** for promotions, while **23% felt under-rewarded** compared to male colleagues.
  - This reflects systemic **bias in evaluation, promotion, and recognition systems.**
- **Lack of Workplace Support: 86% workplaces** lack feeding facilities and **74% lack daycare facilities**.


Government Initiatives to Support Women in STEM
Promoting STEM in school students
INSPIRE Programme: Around 2/3 beneficiaries are women.
Vigyan Jyoti: Targets school-level girls to promote STEM in school-level girls.
Career Support and Retention Schemes
WISE-KIRAN Programme (DST): Comprehensive umbrella scheme supporting women at different career stages, which includes:
WISE-PhD & WISE-PDF: Doctoral and postdoctoral research.
WIDUSHI: Senior women scientists.
WISE-SCOPE: Encourages S&T solutions for societal challenges.
Women Scientist Scheme: Provides fellowships and research grants for women returning after career breaks.
Institutional Reforms to ensure Workplace inclusivity
GATI (Gender Advancement for Transforming Institutions): Promotes gender-sensitive policies and institutional reforms in STEM organizations.
CURIE Programme: Strengthens women's universities by providing advanced research infrastructure.
Skill Development and Global Exposure
WISE-IPR: Training in Intellectual Property Rights (IPR)
WINGS (Women International Grant Support): Enables women scientists to collaborate with international institutions.
Entrepreneurship and Applied Science Initiatives
Women Technology Parks (WTP): Promotes technology-based women entrepreneurship.
BioNEST: Women Bio-Entrepreneurship through Orchid Floriculture in Meghalaya.
Structural Reforms
Science, Technology and Innovation Policy (STIP) 2020: Recommends at least 30% representation of women in decision-making bodies.
Seats in IITs: Increased female enrolment from ~8% (2016) to ~20% (2021–22).
Legal and Support Framework
Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017: Supports working mothers.
Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2013: Ensures safety.

- **Gender Stereotypes and Workplace Culture:** STEM continues to be perceived as male-dominated, creating psychological pressure.
- **Recognition and Award Gap:** Only ~**3.4% of Bhatnagar Awards** have gone to women since **1958.**
  - This limits **visibility, motivation, and career advancement** opportunities.
- **Underrepresentation in Leadership:** E.g. Only **1/17 Department of Science and Technology (DST) secretaries, 2/9 Department of Biotechnology (DBT) secretaries** are women, reflecting a major leadership gap.

Conclusion

India's **journey of women in STEM** reflects a **clear transition from exclusion to participation** and **leadership**. Ultimately, **empowering women in STEM is not just a question of equity**, but a necessity for innovation, productivity, and India's vision of **becoming a developed, knowledge-driven nation.**

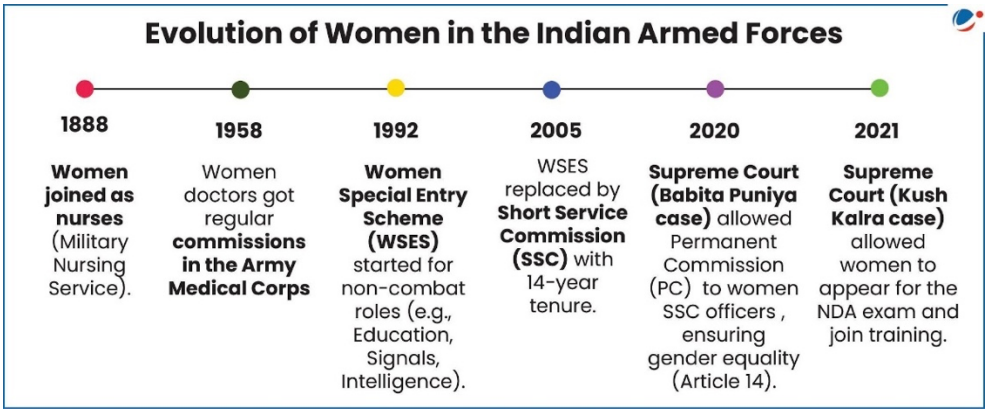
2.9. WOMEN IN ARMED FORCES

Why in the news?

The **first-ever batch of 17 female cadets** graduated from the **National Defence Academy (NDA).**

Significance of Women in Armed Forces

- **Constitutional Equality:** Reinforces **Article 14** (Right to Equality), **Article 15** (Prohibition of discrimination) and **Article 16** (Equal opportunity in public employment).
- **Operational Strength:** Enhances the **talent pool** and brings **diverse perspectives** to planning and execution. Improves **team performance** and decision-making.
  - The number of women officers in the armed forces has grown to around **11,000**.


Evolution of Women in the Indian Armed Forces
1888
Women joined as nurses (Military Nursing Service).
1958
Women doctors got regular commissions in the Army Medical Corps
1992
Women Special Entry Scheme (WSES) started for non-combat roles (e.g., Education, Signals, Intelligence).
2005
WSES replaced by Short Service Commission (SSC) with 14-year tenure.
2020
Supreme Court (Babita Puniya case) allowed Permanent Commission (PC) to women SSC officers, ensuring gender equality (Article 14).
2021
Supreme Court (Kush Kalra case) allowed women to appear for the NDA exam and join training.

- **Social Impact:** Women excelling in both **combat and support roles**, displaying strong professionalism, helps **break gender stereotypes** in a traditionally male-dominated space.
  - **E**.g. During **Operation Sindoor**, Col. Sofia Qureshi and Wing Cmdr. Vyomika Singh led press briefings.
- **Humanitarian Role:** Women play a key role in **Military Civic Action** by building trust with local communities especially where male soldiers have limited access due to cultural norms. Crucial for **conflict resolution** and **winning hearts and minds**.
  - **Major Swathi Shanthakumar** (Indian Army) honoured with the **UN Secretary-General's Award 2025** in the **Gender Category** for her work on the **"Equal Partners, Lasting Peace" initiative** while serving with the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS).

Steps taken to Increase Women's Participation in the Armed Forces

- **Policy Measures**
  - **Permanent Commission (PC):** Granted to Women Officers (WOs) in 11 Arms & Services (in addition to Army Medical Corps, Army Dental Corps and Military Nursing Service).
  - **Women as Agniveers**: Recruits undergo same training and selection standards as men. The **Navy** became the **first** Service to leverage the **Agnipath scheme** for women's recruitment.
- **Structural Reforms**
  - **Army Aviation Corps:** Women allowed as pilots since 2021.

- **Women on Warships:** Now posted on naval ships, including roles like Navigation Officers.
- **Outreach & Support Initiatives: IAF'S 'DISHA'** Cell conducts **nationwide campaigns and motivational talks** to attract young women.

Challenges for Women in the Armed Forces

- **Gender Bias & Societal Attitudes**: Some leaders still hold **stereotypes**, questioning women's ability in leadership or combat. This may lead to **role marginalization** and **underrepresentation.**
- **Infrastructure Deficits**: Lack of **gender-sensitive facilities** in remote or combat areas (e.g., **Siachen, submarines**).
- **Physical Demands & Training Gaps**: **Combat roles** often come with high physical standards. Concerns have been raised over **pregnancy**, and lack of **customized training**.
- **Work-Life Balance: Frequent transfers**, long postings cause **personal life challenges**, the problem may be exacerbated by childbirth.

Conclusion

As warfare evolves to prioritize technology, intelligence, and adaptability over physical strength, increasing women's participation in India's armed forces requires comprehensive reforms across multiple dimensions. Success hinges on **implementing role-specific fitness standards**, fostering **gender sensitization**, strengthening mechanisms against harassment etc.

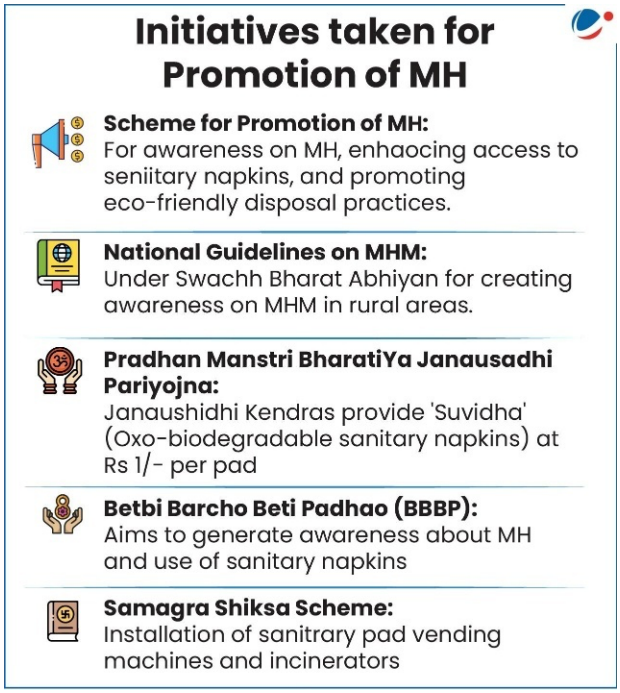
2.10. MENSTRUAL HEALTH

Why in the News?

The Supreme Court in **Dr. Jaya Thakur v. Government of India and Others (2026)** ruled **menstrual health integral to Right to Life**, directing pan-India implementation of the Union's **'Menstrual Hygiene (MH) Policy for School-going Girls'** in Classes 6–12.

Key Highlights of the judgment

- **Menstrual Health as a fundamental right:** Right to life under Article 21 of the Constitution includes the right to menstrual health**.**
- **Link to Article 14 (Right to Equality):** Inaccessibility of MH measures strip away the **right to participate** on equal terms in schools.
- **Dignity of a girl child**: Dignity must translate into living conditions free from humiliation, stigma, and exclusion.
- **Structural discrimination:** Inaccessibility of sanitary products affects **fundamental right to education (Article 21A)** and **Right to Education (RTE) Act.**
- **Mandatory institutional measures:** All schools must provide sensitization of teachers and students, gender-segregated toilets, free sanitary napkins (preferably through vending machines), and dedicated MHM corners.


Initiatives taken for Promotion of MH
Scheme for Promotion of MH:
For awareness on MH, enhaocing access to seniitary napkins, and promoting eco-friendly disposal practices.
National Guidelines on MHM:
Under Swachh Bharat Abhiyan for creating awareness on MHM in rural areas.
Pradhan Manstri BharatiYa Janausadhi Pariyojna:
Janaushidhi Kendras provide 'Suvidha' (Oxo-biodegradable sanitary napkins) at Rs 1/- per pad
Betbi Barcho Beti Padhao (BBBP):
Aims to generate awareness about MH and use of sanitary napkins
Samagra Shiksa Scheme:
Installation of sanitrary pad vending machines and incinerators

Menstrual Leave

The SC Disposed off a writ petition seeking **mandatory paid menstrual leave**, welcoming **voluntary policies** and **cautioned** against making it **mandatory through law.**

Leave (paid or unpaid) intended for women when **experiencing discomfort and health issues** during **menstruation** like dysmenorrhea, endometriosis, etc.

Benefits of Providing Menstrual Leave

- **Workplace Productivity**: Leave may offer restored capacity and recovery as against the productivity lost due to absenteeism.
- **Health and Well-being**: Provides relief to individuals experiencing severe menstrual symptoms.
- **De-stigmatize Menstruation:** Advance **gender equality,** reduce social and cultural taboos related to menstrual health.
- **Gender-Sensitive Workplaces:** Demonstrates institutional commitment to equity and inclusion.
- **Improves Labour Force Participation:** Creates a supportive environment that can help retain women in the workforce.

Key Challenges

- **Reinforce Gender Stereotypes: Risk of discrimination** in hiring and promotion with already **existing obligations** on employers like maternity benefits and creche facilities, etc.
- **Equality versus Equity:** Critics argue that special leave may conflict with the principle of equal treatment.
- **Privacy Concerns:** Employees may feel uncomfortable disclosing menstrual health conditions and compromise dignity.
- **Unequal Access:** Formal sector employees may benefit more than those in the informal, Gig and contractual economy. E.g. Informal Sector employs ~88% of workforce.

Existing Menstrual Leave Policies

- **India:** Currently **no law governing** it. However, some state policies exist.
  - **Bihar** (first state to introduce in 1992); **Kerala** (2023); **Odisha** (2024); and **Karnataka** (2024).
- **Global:** Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Spain have policies in place.
- **Private Sector:** Zomato, Swiggy, BYJU's, have such policies.

Way Forward

- **Flexible leave models:** Allow menstrual leave as an optional entitlement rather than a mandatory provision.
- **Integrate with wellness policies:** Include flexible work arrangements, work-from-home options, and paid sick leave.
- **Promote menstrual health awareness:** Conduct workplace sensitisation programmes to reduce stigma.

Conclusion

Recognising menstrual health as a fundamental right marks a crucial step towards substantive gender equality, requiring inclusive policies, awareness and accessible facilities to uphold dignity, education and workplace participation.

2.11. KEYWORDS

Keywords				
Women-led Development	Nari Shakti	Tirupati Resolution on women-led development	Gender Gap	Double Burden
Maternal Mortality Ratio	Manosphere	Cyberbullying	Technology Facilitated Violence against Women and Girls (TFVAWG)	Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace
Vishaka judgement	Justice Hema Committee	Marital rape	Doctrine of Coverture	Consent
Structural discrimination	Menstrual Hygiene Management	Maternity penalty	Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI)	Lifecycle Approach to Gender Parity by NITI Aayog-CII

2.12. PRACTICE QUESTION

Is India transitioning from 'Women Development' to 'Women-Led Development'? Examine. Enlist the barriers to women-led development while suggesting ways to overcome them.			
Introduction	Body Part 1	Body Part 2	Conclusion
Introduce by defining Women-led development with reference to women development.	Examine India's transition by citing progress in grassroots leadership (46% elected representatives in local governments are women), financial empowerment (68% PM MUDRA loan beneficiaries) etc.	Enlist barriers such as political underrepresentation, economic gaps (only 27% of the STEM workforce), digital divide and patriarchal social norms. Also, suggest ways to overcome them through initiatives like the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, Tirupati Resolution etc.	Conclude with linking women-led development (women as active change-makers) with inclusive growth and Viksit Bharat @2047.

Lakshya
MAINS MENTORING PROGRAM 2026
35 Days Expert Intervention
A Strategic Revision, Practice, and Mentoring Program for UPSC Prelims Examination
5 JULY 2026
Highly experienced and qualified team of Mentors for continuous support and guidance
A structured plan of revision for GS Prelims, CSAT, and Current Affairs
Effective Utilization of learning resources, including PYQs, Quick Revision Modules (QRMs), and PT-365

Lakshya
PRELIMS & MAINS INTEGRATED MENTORING PROGRAM
Lakshya Prelims & Mains Integrated Mentoring Program 2027
(A Strategic Revision, Practice, and Mentoring Program for UPSC Prelims and Mains Examination 2026)
VisionIAS introduces the Lakshya Prelims & Mains Integrated Mentoring Programme 2027, offering unified guidance for UPSC aspirants across both stages, ensuring comprehensive support and strategic preparation for success
2027
14 MONTHS
1 JULY
Highlights of the Program
Coverage of the entire UPSC Prelims and Mains Syllabus
Development of Advanced answer writing skills
Highly experienced and qualified team of senior mentors
Special emphasis to Essay & Ethics

3. CHILDREN

3.1. RISING SUICIDES AMONG STUDENTS

Why in the News?

Noting the **'deepening crisis' of suicides**, the Supreme Court (SC) issued guidelines and interim directions to protect the **mental health of students** in colleges, coaching centres, and Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs).

Key Recent Judgements

- **Sukdeb Saha v State of Andhra Pradesh (2025):** The SC issued **guidelines targeting colleges and coaching centres.**
- **Amit Kumar v Union of India (2025):** Invoking Article 142, the SC issued **interim directions** based on suggestions by a **National Task Force (NTF)** constituted in **2025** to address the alarming rise in student suicides in HEIs.

Status of Youth and Student Suicides in India

- India reports **highest youth suicides in the world** with **18-30 age** group accounting for **33%** and **18–45 age** group accounting **for ~65% of all suicide cases**. (NCRB 2024)
- **8.5%** of the total cases of **suicides** are related to **students. (NCRB 2024)**
- **Male student suicides** surged by **99% while female jumped by 92%** (2012-2022).
- Suicides are among the leading causes of death in the 15–29 age group (SRS).

Factors contributing to Student's Mental Health Crisis

- **Academic Pressures:** Narrow definition of success, Academic dissatisfaction, academic stress and academic failure, particularly related to competitive exams.
- **Systemic Issues:** Discrimination and harassment in educational setting e.g., Ragging, Bullying, Sexual Assault, etc. erodes a sense of belonging and trust.
- **Poor Institutional Responsibility:** They tend to individualize blame, attributing suicides to personal shortcomings rather than systemic issues.
- **Culture of Silence:** Lack of open discussion and stigma on mental health coupled with insufficient safeguards acts as a social barrier.
- **Legislative and Regulatory Vacuum:** Multiple regulations like UGC Regulations, NEP 2020, National Suicide Prevention Strategy, Mental Healthcare Act 2017 lead to weak enforcement.
- **Family Issues:** Family conflict and instability (divorce, separation, financial hardships), parental neglect, loss of loved ones, history of mental illnesses, adverse childhood experiences, etc.
- **Others:** Low Self Esteem; social isolation; Socio-economic discrimination (Caste-based, gender-based), addiction to social media etc.

Initiatives taken to improve Mental Health of Students

- **Mental Healthcare Act, 2017:** Rights-based legislation recognising **every person's right to access** mental healthcare and protection.
- **National Strategy for Suicide Prevention (2022):** Aims to **reduce suicide mortality by 10% by 2030.**
- **National Tele Mental Health Programme (Tele MANAS):** 24/7 toll-free centralized helpline providing access to mental health care services.
- **Manodarpan Initiative:** By the **Ministry of Education** to monitor and promote mental health of students and teachers during COVID 19 and beyond.

Way Forward: Key guidelines by the SC in Sukdeb Saha case

- **Uniform Mental Health Policy:** To be adopted and implemented by all educational institutions, **reviewed and updated annually** and made publicly accessible.

- **Appoint Qualified Counsellor/Psychologist/Social Workers**: At least one in all educational institution with **100 or more enrolled students.**
- **Mandatory Staff Training:** At least twice a year, conducted by certified mental health professionals, on psychological first-aid, identifying warning signs, etc.
- **Grievance Redressal Mechanism:** Robust, confidential, and accessible at all educational institutions.
- **Sensitizing Parents and Guardians:** To **avoid placing undue academic pressure** and to recognise signs of psychological distress, and to **respond empathetically and supportively.**
- **Extracurricular Activities:** Prioritizing sports, arts, and personality development initiatives.
- **Coaching Institutions/Hubs:** Implement **heightened mental health protections** and preventive measures. E.g. career counselling services for students and parents/guardians.
- **Residential Educational Institutions:** Take **proactive steps** to ensure that campuses remain free from harassment, bullying, drugs, and other harmful substances.

SC Directions in Amit Kumar v. Union of India to address rise in student suicides in HEIs

- **Unified Well-being Framework:** The National Task Force is tasked with creating a **"Universal Design Framework"** and model SOPs for **"well-being audits".**
  - Audit scores may be directly linked to NAAC grading to ensure institutional compliance.
- **Data Centralization: Sample Registration System's data on suicides, esp. for the 15-29 age group, must be centrally maintained for data-led policy making.**
- **Others:** Mandatory reporting of cases, filling vacancies, ensure timely disbursal of Scholarships, 24/7 Medical Help in HEI or within 1km radius, etc.

Conclusion

Improving student mental health requires a **holistic approach** that combines **peer support, adequate funding for trained professionals, responsible media practices**, and strong **institutional accountability**.

3.2. DIGITAL ADDICTION A PUBLIC HEALTH THREAT

Why in the News?

Economic Survey 2025-26 recognizes **digital addiction,** primarily in youth, as a significant public health threat.

Causes of digital addiction among children/youth

- **Digital Accessibility:** Near-universal mobile/internet use among 15–29-year-old in India.
- **High Screen Time:** 74% of students spend more than 2 hours/day on screens for non-academic purposes, and 21% exceed 4 hours/day. (National Council of CBSE Schools study)
- **Algorithms and design:** Maturing brain circuits of youth are susceptible to the high-stimulus, instant-gratification designs such as infinite scroll, autoplay, targeted ads.
- **Social:** Peer Pressure, weak social relations, lack of face-to-face communication with family and friends, loneliness and anxiety etc.

Impact of Digital Addiction

- **Mental Health Deterioration:** Digital addiction is associated with **low self-esteem** and cyberbullying stress, while gaming disorders are linked **to aggression and social withdrawal.**
  - An estimated **7-10% of Indian adolescents** have diagnosable **mental health conditions.** (National Mental Health Survey).
- **Cognitive and Academic Decline:** It leads to **"sleep debt,"** distractions, and reduced **focus,** which negatively impacts **academic performance and productivity.**
- **Erosion of Social Capital: E.g.** Replacement of physical affection or **"child cuddling" with "digital babysitting"** disrupts **family bonding** and **primary socialization**.
- **Physical and Financial Harms:** E.g. financial losses from cyber fraud and risky online behaviors like gambling, as well as healthcare burdens.

Way Forward

- **Policy Reforms: Platforms** must be held **accountable** for enforcing **age verification** and providing age-appropriate content through measures like **Age-based access limits.**
  - Integration of Digital Addiction into National Mental Health Strategy
- **Education Reforms:** Integrating a **'Digital Wellness Curriculum'** covering screen-time literacy, cyber safety, and mental health awareness.
- **Data-based Research:** E.g. **Karnataka's 'Digital Detox Centre - Beyond Screens'** serves as a resource hub for individuals facing digital addiction.
- **Awareness & Behavioural Change:** E.g. **Voluntary "digital diets"** (structured device-free periods) alongside **buddy/mentor systems** and **technology-free zones.**

Schemes and Initiatives

- **Tele-MANAS (Tele Mental Health Assistance and Networking Across States):** 24/7 toll-free mental health helpline (14416) connecting callers to trained professionals at no cost.
- **The SHUT (Service for Healthy Use of Technology) Clinic**: At NIMHANS, Bengaluru, provides specialised care for excessive and compulsive technology use, focusing on youth.
- **Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Act, 2025**: It bans online money games involving wagering, restricts advertising, and introduces licensing for skill-based games.
- **Ministry of Education's Pragyatah framework**: Guides digital education planning with attention to screen time.
- **National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) Guidelines:** Prescribes screen-time limits and online safety standards for children.

Global Best Practices

- **WHO** formally recognised **Gaming Disorder** as a **mental health condition.**
- **China's 'Fatigue system':** Caps gaming at one hour per day on weekends and holidays, enforced through real-name registration for minors.
- **South Korea: Parental control models** enabling regulation of children's digital access.

Conclusion

Digital addiction is a rising concern in today's digital age and there is a need to **rebalance youth engagement by combining restrictive safeguards with positive offline opportunities** without demonising technology. This means **addressing digital overloads** that harm sleep, mood, attention, and finances, while **preserving technology's role in learning and economic growth**, ensuring it remains a driver of empowerment rather than addiction.

3.2.1. SOCIAL MEDIA BAN FOR CHILDREN

Why in the News?

Australia became the first country to enforce a nationwide social media ban for children under 16 under the **Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Act 2024.**

Should Social Media be Banned for Children?

Arguments in Favour	Arguments Against
• **Cognitive Development:** Excessive use affects concentration, learning, and memory. • **Mental Health:** Social media addiction increases anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).	• **Age Verification & Privacy:** Risk of loopholes; verification methods may compromise privacy.

- **Physical Health:** Promotes sedentary lifestyle, disrupted sleep, obesity, eating disorders.
- **Social Development:** Reduces face-to-face interaction, causes isolation, family strain.
- **Online Safety:** Children exposed to cyberbullying, sexual predators, harmful content.
- **Dangerous Trends:** Viral challenges can cause injuries or legal issues. E.g. "Blackout Challenge" (breath-holding)
- **Parental Supervision Gaps:** Urban dual-working households may lead to excessive screen time. E.g. **"iPad kid" phenomenon**
- **Algorithmic Manipulation:** Personalized content drives addiction and overuse.
- **Over-Regulation:** Legitimate users on gaming/communication platforms may be restricted.
- **Unsafe Spaces:** Children may shift to dark web or unregulated platforms.
- **Human Rights & Inclusion:** Restricts freedom of expression; may exclude vulnerable groups.
- **Digital Skill Limitation:** Reduces creative, educational, and collaborative opportunities.

Steps taken to Protect children from Social Media

India: State-level Bans:

- **Karnataka** became first state to ban social media for children **under 16.**
- **Andhra Pradesh** proposed law to ban social media for children **under-13.**
- **Goa** is studying the possibility of implementing Social media ban for children **under-16**

Global:

- **Nationwide ban on social media:** Australia, Indonesia, Malaysia (Under 16); France (under 15).
- **United States:** Kids Online Safety Act provides protections for children online related to privacy and mental health concerns.
- **U.K .:** Online Safety Act, 2023 sets tougher standards for social media platforms like facebook- including appropriate age restrictions.
- **European Union:** General Data Protection Regulation required Parental consent for processing of personal data for children under age of **16,** though member states can lower that limit to **13.**

India's initiative to protect children on Online Platforms

- **Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023:** Parental consent required for children under 18.
- **Information Technology Act Section 67B & POCSO Act 2012:** Punish online child sexual abuse.
- **National Action Plan for Children (2016):** Prevent crimes against children.
- **National Commission of Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR):** Online complaint system for child rights violations.
- **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child Ratification (1990):** Strengthens protections online and offline.

Way Forward

- **Child-Centric Digital Governance:** Governments, tech firms, and parents must ensure safe online spaces; adopt age-appropriate design and algorithm accountability.
- **Redressal Mechanisms:** Empower Child Helpline 1098, cyber nodal officers, POCSO e-box for reporting threats.
- **Digital Skills & Education:** Promote responsible online behaviour; e.g., Kerala's Digital De-Addiction centres for digital addiction.
- **Awareness Campaigns:** NIPUN Bharat and Digital India programs educate children, parents, teachers.
- **Parental Involvement:** Joint account setup, privacy settings, screen-time management tools.
- **Tech Accountability:** Platforms should create child-safe spaces; age limits enforced (e.g., Meta 13+).

Conclusion

By prioritising age-appropriate design, digital literacy, and safe online spaces, societies can ensure that children are shielded from risks without being excluded from the positive and empowering potential of the digital world.

3.3. JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM IN INDIA

Why in the News?

The report "**Juvenile Justice and Children in Conflict with the Law: A Study of Capacity at the Frontlines**" by the **India Justice Report** evaluated the **functioning of the Indian Juvenile Justice System** ten years after enactment of Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2015 (JJ Act).

Juvenile Justice (JJ) Act, 2015 (amended in 2021)

- **The Act consolidates and amends law relating to children found to be in conflict with law** and children in need of care and protection.
- **Defines Child:** as a person who has not completed 18 years of age, and **Juvenile** as a child below age of 18 years.
- **Juvenile Justice Board (JJB)**: Mandates **setting up JJBs in every district** to deal with cases of Children in conflict with law.
- **Monitoring of Implementation of Act**: By National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (National level) and State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (State level).
- **Preliminary Assessment** by Juvenile Justice Board **into heinous offences** allegedly committed by children above 16 may decide if tried as adults.
- **Child Welfare Committee (CWC)**: Constituted for every district by State Government to conduct inquiry. Handles care, protection, foster placement for children in need.

Issues in Juvenile Justice System

- **Inconsistent JJBs**: As of 2023-2024, there were **707 JJBs across 765 districts**. Only 18 states and the UT of Jammu & Kashmir had a JJB in every district.
- **Uneven capacity of JJBs**: **24% functioned without a full bench**, resulting in weaker child- sensitive adjudications, longer case durations.
- **Rising Pendency**: 55% of JJ cases filed before 362 JJBs remained pending as of October 31, 2023 due to resource constraints; high institutionalisation in observation homes (~83%).
- **Lack of oversight:** Monthly CCI inspections underperformed despite legal mandate.
- **Others:** Poor access to information and underutilisation of funds; no central case repository of cases.

Important Judicial Pronouncement related to Juvenile Justice System

- **Sheela Barse v. UoI (1986)**: Supreme Court directed regular visits by District and Sessions Judges to ensure that rights of detained juvenile children were not being violated.
- **Sampurna Behura v. UoI (2005)**: Supreme Court directed all States/UTs to establish and ensure functioning of JJBs, Child Welfare Committee, to prevent case backlogs.

Way Forward to strengthen Juvenile Justice System

- **Strengthen JJB Capacity**: With adequate trained personnel in key positions such as judges etc.
- **Leverage technology to enhance efficiency**: Deploy digital case management and centralised juvenile data.
- **Fast-track juvenile courts:** To prevent prolonged detention of children awaiting trial.
- **Strict monitoring and accountability mechanisms:** to prevent rights violations, mistreatment, or abuse within juvenile institutions.
- **Juvenile handling**: Establishing **specialized juvenile justice units within police stations** and courts can improve sensitive handling of juvenile cases and ensure that due process is followed.

Conclusion

Strengthening India's juvenile justice system requires **moving decisively from a compliance-driven approach to a child-centric, rights-based framework** that prioritises rehabilitation over retribution. Bridging capacity gaps in Juvenile Justice Boards, leveraging technology for transparency and case tracking, and institutionalising regular training and oversight can significantly improve outcomes for children in conflict with the law.

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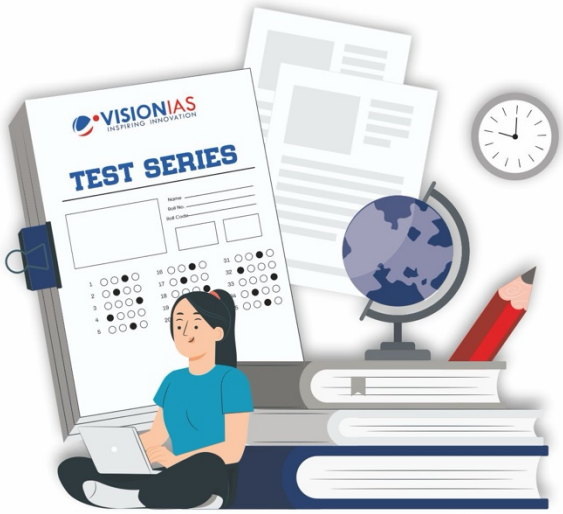

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3.4. CHILD LABOUR AT A GLANCE

Child Labour

Child labour comprises work that children are too young to perform and/or work that, by its nature or circumstances, is likely to harm children's health, safety or morals.

Key Data and Facts

10.1 million (3.9%) children engaged in child labour in India. (Census 2011)	Agriculture remains the largest employer.	Child labour declined by 20 million since 2000, but target of eliminating child labour by 2025 (SDG 8.7) not achieved.	~138 million (7.8%) children (5-17 years) worldwide engaged; 54 million (3.1%) in hazardous work (ILO-UNICEF)

Constitutional Provisions

Article 24: Prohibition of employment of children in factories, etc.	**Article 23:** Prohibition of traffic in human beings and forced labour.	**Article 39(e):** Directs the state to ensure that the tender age of children is not abused.

Legal Provisions

Child and Adolescent Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Act, 1986 (amended in 2016): Prohibits child labour (<14 years); adolescents (14–18 years) in hazardous occupations.	**Commistion for Protection of Child Rights Act, 2005:** Establishes National Commission for Protection of Child Rights.	**Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009:** Ensures universal elementary education.
Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015: Provides for rescue, care, and rehabilitation of children.	**POCSO Act, 2012:** Protects children from sexual exploitation linked to trafficking and labour	

Indian Initiatives and Global Initiatives

Indian Initiatives
- National Policy on Child Labour, 1987
- National Child Labour Project (NCLP) Scheme, 1988 (Merged with Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan)
- PENCIL (Platform for Effective Enforcement for No Child Labour) portal
- Childline 1098 (Emergency services)
- Civil Society: Bachpan Bachao Andolan, CARE India, Child Rights and You (CRY), etc.

Global Initiatives
- UN Declaration of the Rights of the Child, 1959
- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), 1989
- ILO Conventions on Child Labour (138 and 182) India ratified in 2017
- Durban Call to Action on the Elimination of Child Labour (2022)

Reasons for Persistence of Child Labour and Way Forward in Eradicating Child Labour

Reasons for Persistence of Child Labour
- **Vicious cycle of poverty:** School dropouts and low-skilled informal work hinder socio-economic mobility.
- **Weak enforcement:** Outdated data and legal loopholes (e.g., "family enterprise" clause).
- **Cultural acceptance:** Demand driven by lower wages, pliability, and perceived nimbleness.
- **Vulnerabilities in distress:** Migration, trafficking, conflicts, humanitarian crises, and climate disasters increase child labour.

Way Forward in Eradicating Child Labour
- **Strengthen Enforcement:** Enhance inspections, inter-ministerial coordination, and data systems with civil society participation.
- **Socio-economic empowerment:** Expand education, skilling, employment, and social protection to break poverty cycles.
- **Strengthen International cooperation:** E.g. Nepal, Bangladesh on cross-border trafficking.
- **Targeted interventions** for migrant and informal-sector children; strengthen rehabilitation.

Conclusion

Child labour in India has declined over the decades but remains a persistent challenge due to the intersection of poverty, educational deprivation and informality. Need for strict law enforcement, universal quality education, robust social protection and community participation.

3.5. CHILD MARRIAGE IN INDIA

Why in the News?

Government marked the first anniversary of its **Bal Vivah Mukt Bharat Abhiyan** with a 100-day awareness campaign to eliminate child marriage.

What Is Child Marriage?

- Child marriage, defined under **Prohibition of Child Marriage Act** is a marriage **between female under 18 years and a male below 21 years of age.**
- Child Marriage **violates** provisions of **Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women** and the **Convention on the Rights of the Child.**
  - It perpetuates cycles of poverty, gender inequality, and health risks, particularly in rural and tribal areas.
  - **Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5.3** aims to eliminate all harmful practices, including child, early, and forced marriages, by 2030.

Status of Child Marriage in India (NFHS-5)

- **Overall decline** from 47.4% (2005–06) to **23.3% (2019–21).**
- **Decline slowing**: only 3.5% points drop between 2015–16 and 2019–21.
- **Highest prevalence**: West Bengal (42%), Bihar (40%), Tripura (39%).
- **Lowest**: Lakshadweep (4%), Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh (6%), Himachal, Goa, Nagaland (7%).

Causes of Prevalence of Child marriages in India

- **Legal and Policy-related:**
  - **Poor implementation of laws**: Weak enforcement of legal provisions like the PCMA and POCSO.
  - **Lack of awareness, and poor monitoring**: Especially in rural and remote areas. E.g. Conviction and Reporting of child marriage cases are extremely low.
  - **Education Gap**: 48% of girls with no education married before 18 years, compared to only 4% with higher education, showing **education as a key protective factor**.
- **Economic:**
  - **Economic Disparity**: **Poverty** drives child marriage. E.g. 40% of girls from the lowest wealth quintile married as children, versus 8% from the highest quintile.
  - **Marriage as financial transaction**: Young girls are sometimes "traded" to settle debts, secure wealth, or gain economic stability.
  - **Social Status:** In **affluent families** sometimes marry off daughters early **to preserve social standing.**
- **Cultural and Social:**
  - **Social Backwardness:** A higher prevalence of child marriage among Scheduled Castes and Tribes (**SC/STs**) with **26%** marrying below the stipulated legal age. (NFHS-5)
  - **Preservation of family honour**: Emphasis on virginity, family reputation, and moral norms.
  - **Traditional Patriarchal practices**: Cultural beliefs value older husbands as protectors and view unmarried girls as liabilities.
  - **Societal pressure and gender norms**: Women's dependence on men, expectations of early childbearing and associating prosperity with many children reinforces child marriage.
  - **Regional and community practices**: Certain communities continue the practice due to entrenched cultural norms, regardless of laws or economic status.
    - **Eight Indian states** report child-marriage rates **above the national average.**

Initiatives taken by Government

- **Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA), 2006**: Prohibits marriage of girls under 18 and boys under 21; authorizes State Government to appoint **Child Marriage Prohibition Officers** (CMPO).
- **Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012**
- **The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015**
- **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme (2015)**

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- **NALSA (ASHA - Awareness, Support, Help and Action) SOP - Towards Eliminating Child Marriage, 2025:** Three-tier institutional action based on Prevention, Protection and Rehabilitation
- **State Government Initiatives**:
  - **Odisha's Child Marriage Free Village initiative:** Declared 13,500+ Villages Child Marriage Free.
  - **West Bengal's Kanyashree scheme**: Financial support for girls, conditional on continued education and delayed marriage.
  - **Balod district (Chhattisgarh): India's first child marriage-free district**.

Way Forward

- **Legislative Reforms: Uniform Code** for marriageable age across all religions and regions.
- **Data Aggregation: Regular, sustained data collection on child marriages to address under-reporting and inform policy.**
- **Enforcement:** Appoint full-time Child Marriage Prohibition officers (**CMPOs)** at district/sub-district levels (per SC directive in Society for Enlightenment and Voluntary Action vs. UoI Case); establish **Special Child Marriage Prohibition Units** for coordination and grievance redressal.
- **Prevention:** Mandatory multi-sectoral awareness campaigns (schools, Anganwadis, NGOs, religious leaders); train police, judiciary, teachers, and health workers; maintain databases of at-risk areas.
- **Targeted action: MWCD's Akshaya Tritiya directive** to curb mass weddings during high-risk cultural periods.

Conclusion

The approach to address child marriage must be through the entire lifecycle of a child, especially by addressing persisting harmful social norms, which are key drivers for the high prevalence of child marriage in India.

3.6. CHILD ADOPTION

Why in the news?

Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA) issued memorandums to all State Adoption Resource Agencies (SARAs) to **reinforce compliance with adoption procedures** under **JJ Act, 2015 (amended 2021)** and **Adoption Regulations, 2022**.

Key Directions

- **Strict Due Process**: **No orphan/abandoned child can be free for adoption without inquiry** and tracing biological parents; Surrendered children require a mandatory 2-month reconsideration period.
- **Record Management**: Adoption records must be securely preserved and transferred even if institutions shutdown**.**
- **Protect Identity:** JJ Act 2015 (section 74) prevents identity disclosure of child in conflict with law or in need of care/protection.
- **Strengthen psychosocial support** for PAPs, adopted children, and biological parents.
- **Designate/empanel qualified counsellors** at District & State levels.
- Provide psychosocial interventions when required by **Specialised Adoption Agencies (SAAs) or District Child Protection Units (DCPUs).**

Child Adoption in India

- **CARA (established in 1990): Statutory** body (by JJ act 2015) under **Ministry of Women and Child Development** for adoption of orphaned, abandoned and surrendered children.
  - It deals with domestic, relative, step-parent and foster adoption.
  - Central Authority for **inter-country adoption** under **Hague Convention 1993** (Ratified by India in 2003).
- **State/local level adoption** handled by SARAs, Child Welfare Committees (CWC) and District Child Protection Units.

Status of Child Adoption in India (As per Children in India 2025 Report)

- Total adoptions **increased** from 3,927 (2017-18) to **4,515 (2024-25).**
- **In-country adoptions**: 4,155 in 2024-25

- **Inter-country adoptions:** 360–653 annually.

Framework of Child Adoption in India

- **Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act (HAMA), 1956**: Permits adoption to Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, and Sikhs.
- **Guardians and Wards Act, 1890:** Governs guardianship, particularly for Muslims and Christians, as their personal laws do not recognise full adoption.
- **JJ Act 2015**: Provides for a comprehensive framework for adoption for all.
- **Adoption Regulation 2022:** Upper age limit reduced (For child < 2 years); **Couples:** Combined age reduced to 85 years max; **Single Prospective Adoptive Parents (PAP):** Maximum age 40 years; Minimum age difference with child must be ≥ 25 years.
  - **Exemption:** Age criteria don't apply to Relative or Step-parent Adoptions.
  - **Consent:** Both spouses must consent (married couples); **Single male can't adopt a girl child** while **single female can adopt any gender.**
- **Model Foster care Guidelines, 2024:** Foster parents eligibility expanded to include **any person regardless of marital status** and **with or without biological children.**
  - Allows single females to foster any child. Single males can only foster male children.
  - Stable marital relation for ≥ 2 years; Foster parent can adopt same child after minimum 2 years (earlier 5 years).

Initiatives taken to improve Child Adoption in India

- **CARINGS (Child Adoption Resource Information and Guidance System) portal**: Maintained by CARA and developed by National Informatics Centre to **ensure transparency** in adoption process.
  - Children registered on CARINGS portal in **5 categories i.e. Orphan, Abandoned, Surrendered, No Visitation, and Unfit Guardians.**
  - **Integrated with Mission Vatsalya portal** which is a unified digital platform integrating data on missing, orphaned.
- **Identification Cell:** I**dentify adoptable children in Child Care Institutions** and expedite their declaration as legally free for adoption.

Challenges associated with the process of Child Adoption in India

- **Legal and Procedural Complexities:** Adoption is governed by **multiple laws** such as JJ Act, 2015 and personal laws, leading to **overlapping jurisdictions**.
- **Demand Supply Mismatch:** Adoptive parents (36,381 (2025)) far exceed legally free children for adoption (2,652).
- **Procedural Delays:** Slow inquiries, **prolonged court processes**, and **weak inter-agency coordination**.
  - In 2024, only 3,684 children declared legally free with just 2177 entering adoption pool.
  - **Average waiting period** for prospective parents is **~3.5 years (**2025), which may drive illegal adoption.
- **Preference bias:** Preference for children aged 0–2, Low Adoption of Special Needs Children and older children.

Way ahead

- **Legal Harmonisation:** Streamline overlapping provisions under JJ Act 2015, and HAMA 1956 to **create a uniform, child-centric legal framework.**
- **Streamline Procedures**: E.g. Introduce **single-window digital clearance systems**; strengthen institutional capacities (staff, training, infrastructure) and coordination among CWCs, SARAs, CARA.
- **Others: Incentivize Adoption of Special Needs and Older Children though** financial and medical support; generate awareness (e.g. National Adoption Awareness Month (November)); post adoption support (counselling, grievance redressal) etc.

Conclusion

A transparent, child-centric and efficient adoption ecosystem, supported by robust legal safeguards and psychosocial support, is essential to secure every child's right to a loving family and holistic development.

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3.7. KEYWORDS

Keywords				
Youth protests	Student Suicides	well-being audits	Digital Addiction	Cognitive and Academic Decline
child cuddling	digital babysitting	Age-based access limits	Digital Detox/ Digital Diets	Pragyatah Framework
Juvenile Justice	Child Labour	Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA)	De-familisation	Child Care Institutions

3.8. PRACTICE QUESTION

Critically analyze the proposition that a blanket nationwide ban on social media for children under a certain age group solves one public health crisis but risks creating fresh socio-economic vulnerabilities and digital exclusions.			
Introduction	Body Part 1	Body Part 2	Conclusion
Introduce with current developments related to social media bans for children in Australia, Karnataka etc.	Provide arguments in favour of social media bans for children like protection from cyberbullying, cognitive impacts of social media etc.	Provide arguments against bans such as potential development of illegal networks and linkages to dark web, digital skills limited etc.	Conclude with a balanced view of adequate safeguards to protect children while providing avenues for digital skill development.

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4. VULNERABLE SECTIONS

4.1. TRIBAL POPULATION IN INDIA AT A GLANCE

Tribal Population in India

Tribal people are distinct social and cultural groups that share collective ancestral ties to the lands and natural resources where they live. e.g., Maori, Munda, Ho etc.

Key Data and Facts

Population: 10.45 crore (8.6%) (2011 census)	40.6% ST population is below poverty line (Tribal Health Report).	75 Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs), living in remote and hard-to-reach areas.	Ministry of Tribal Affairs' budget tripled to ₹13,000 crore (2014-15 to 2024-25)	**Genetic Disorders:** Sickle Cell Disease (SCD) is prevalent in 1 in 86 births.

Criteria for identifying PVTGs

Pre-agricultural level of technology	Low level of literacy	Economic backwardness	A declining or stagnant population

Issues faced by the Tribal People

Identity Erosion: Traditional systems clash with modern ones, e.g., Extinction of tribal dialect.	**Forced displacement:** Development projects, disasters, and conflict.	**Low literacy:** ST Literacy rate is 59%, which is 73% among general population. (Census 2011).	**Triple health burden:** Malnutrition, communicable and non-communicable diseases, and mental illness and addiction.	**Climate vulnerability:** Dependence on natural resources heightens climate risks.

Constitutional Measures and Legislative Measures

Constitutional Measures
- Article 342: Notification of STs
- Schedule V and VI (Article 244)
- Article 275: Grant of special funds for promoting the welfare of STs.
- Article 338A: National Commission for STs.

Legislative Measures
- Panchayat (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996
- Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006
- SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989

Government Schemes

- **Tribal Village Development:** PM Janjatiya Unnat Gram Abhiyan; Dharti Aaba Janjatiya Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan; Pradhan Mantri Adi Adarsh Gram Yojna (PMAAGY)
- **Education and Health:** Eklavya Model Residential School (EMRS); National Sickle Cell Anemia Elimination Mission (2023)- target elimination by 2047
- **Uplift PVTGs:** Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (PM-JANMAN)
- **Tribal Entrepreneurship:** Van Dhan Vikas Kendras; Pradhan Mantri Janjatiya Vikas Mission

Way Forward (as per Panchsheel Principles)

Assess PVTG vulnerabilities: E.g. Tribal Affairs Ministry requested Registrar General of India to enumerate PVTGs separately in the Census.	**Rights-based development:** Protect tribal rights and ensure FPIC (Free, Prior and Informed Consent) for projects on tribal lands.	**Participatory governance:** Integrate PVTGs into governance structures while strengthening traditional institutions.	**Culturally sensitive services:** Design healthcare aligned with tribal ecological and cultural contexts.	**Relevant education:** Provide locally relevant education in tribal languages.

4.1.1. ADI KARMAYOGI ABHIYAN

Why in the News?

The Ministry of Tribal Affairs officially launched the Adi Karmayogi Abhiyan.

About Adi Karmayogi Abhiyan

- It is the **world's largest tribal grassroots leadership programme**, aimed at empowering tribal communities, strengthening responsive governance, and creating **local leadership opportunities**.
- **Target**: Develop a Cadre of **20 lakh,** to operate **in over 1 lakh tribal-dominated** villages across 30 States/UTs.
    - It is expected to reach and uplift **over 10.5 crore tribal** citizens.
- **Vision**: Adi Karmayogi cadre as a **"Tribal Seva Path"**, driven by Seva (Service), Samarpan (Dedication), and Sankalp (Resolve), ensuring **responsive governance** and last-mile service saturation in tribal areas.
- **Key Objectives:**
    - Train and mobilize **20 Lakh Tribal Leaders**
    - Establish **1 Lakh Adi Sewa Kendras**: Single Window Tribal Service Centres to address local issues, mentor youth, and support governance initiatives.
    - Facilitate **Village Vision 2030 Planning & Development Action Plan**
    - Promote **last-mile convergence** & effective service delivery
    - Capture & amplify **voices of tribal communities**
    - Promote **people-centric governance** at village and community levels.
- It forms a key part of the **Janjatiya Gaurav Varsh** (from 15 November 2024 to 15 November 2025) to **Commemorate Bhagwan Birsa Munda's 150th birth anniversary.**

Three Pillars of Leadership
Aadi Karmayogi
Government officers (State to Village level).
Aadi Sahayogi
Youth leaders, teachers, doctors, social workers.
Aadi Saathi
SHG members, tribal leaders in volunteers, cultural icons

Key Outcomes of the Scheme

- **Multi-tiered leadership** structure from habitation to State. (see infographic)
- **Multi-Department Convergence:** Tribal Welfare, Rural Development, Women & Child Development, Jal Shakti, School Education, and Forest.
- **Governance Lab Workshops:** Regional Process Labs (RPLs) to co-create solutions for tribal development.
- **Aadi Karmayogi Digital Platform:** To provide training, data-driven tools, knowledge sharing, and impact dashboards.
- **100% Saturation of Government Services:** E.g. Road connectivity, pucca housing, piped drinking water, etc. ensuring that **no tribal household** is left behind.

Importance of Developing Tribal Cadre for Tribal Development

- **Bridging Delivery Gaps:** Over the last decade, the Scheduled Tribe welfare budget (Development Action Plan for Scheduled Tribes (DAPST)) has witnessed a fivefold increase from **₹25,000 crore to ₹1,24,000** crore but outcomes remain weak due to **poor delivery**.
- **Highest incidence and intensity of Poverty among STs**: 40.6% ST population lived below the poverty line as against 20.5% of the non-tribal population (Tribal Health report).
- **Preserving Vibrant Cultural Expressions: E.g.,** TRIFED is collaborating with various ministries and departments for GI Tagging of tribal Products.
- **Harnessing Tribal Ecological Wisdom: E.g., Dongria Kondh** of Odisha practice millet-based farming conserving agro-biodiversity.
- **Democratizing Development:** Adi Karmayogis will be chosen in consultation with Gram Sabhas to foster trust, ownership, and cultural sensitivity.

Conclusion

A dedicated tribal cadre, can bridge delivery gaps, reduce poverty, and empower Gram Sabhas while preserving culture and ecological wisdom. It is not just about capacity, but transforming tribal development into inclusive and sustainable nation-building.

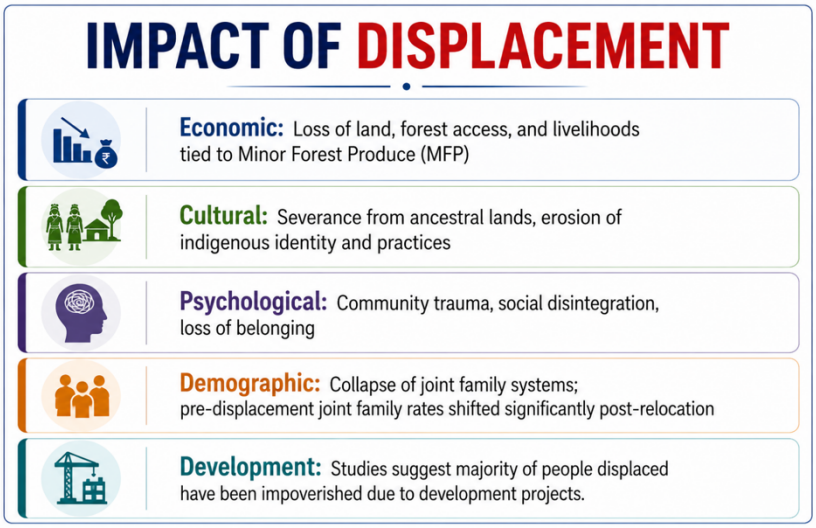
4.1.2. TRIBALS AND DEVELOPMENT-INDUCED DISPLACEMENT

Why in the News?

A **Social Impact Assessment (SIA)** for the **Great Nicobar Trunk Road** approved diversion of 130 ha of tribal reserve land, reigniting debates over development vs. tribal rights.

Causes of Tribal Displacement

- **Development Projects**: E.g. Sardar Sarovar Dam on Narmada River, **Ken-Betwa River Linkage** project.
- **Mining and Industrial Expansion**: E.g. **Dongria Kondh** resistance against bauxite mining in Niyamgiri Hills.
- **Conservation-Driven Displacement**: Forest-dependent tribal communities residing in Tiger Reserves, National Parks, and Wildlife Sanctuaries face relocation pressures.


IMPACT OF DISPLACEMENT
Economic: Loss of land, forest access, and livelihoods tied to Minor Forest Produce (MFP)
Cultural: Severance from ancestral lands, erosion of indigenous identity and practices
Psychological: Community trauma, social disintegration, loss of belonging
Demographic: Collapse of joint family systems; pre-displacement joint family rates shifted significantly post-relocation
Development: Studies suggest majority of people displaced have been impoverished due to development projects.

Legal Framework for Rehabilitation

- **Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006**: Recognises **individual and community forest rights**; prohibits eviction until rights recognition and verification are complete.
- **The Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement (RFCTLARR) Act, 2013**: Makes SIA and a Social Impact Management Plan mandatory before any land acquisition; mandates fair compensation and resettlement.

Challenges in Rehabilitation

- **FRA Implementation**: High claims rejection rate due to procedural errors, poor quality land records, Difficulties in forming Community Forest Resource Management Committees (CFRMCs), poor inter-ministerial coordination and Limited Gram Sabha integration (UNDP report)
- **Insufficient compensation**: Market value of land often undervalued and intangible losses (e.g. cultural, ecological) not accounted.
- **Conservation vs. rights tension**: Traditional conservation models treat forest communities as threats rather than stewards, undermining FRA's inclusive vision.
- **Livelihood disruption**: Restriction of customary forest access and relocation cut off income for many Indigenous groups.
- **Regional Disparity:** Forest-dependent tribal regions lag significantly in infrastructure, skills, and market access.
- **Others**: Delayed implementation, Bureaucratic hurdles and corruption, Lack of community participation in planning, Inadequate livelihood reconstruction, Gender concerns overlooked, lack of cohesive data.

Way Forward

- **Ministry of Tribal Affairs Recommendations**:
  - Relocation from Protected areas must be **voluntary**, based on **free, prior, and informed consent**.
  - Establish a **National Framework for Community-Centred Conservation and Relocation (NFCCR)**.

  - Promote **coexistence models** instead of exclusionary conservation.
- **Strengthen FRA Implementation**: R**ecognise FRA right-holders** across all social protection programs; provide **dedicated funding** under national and state schemes. **(UNDP)**
- **Livelihood diversification:** Scale up Van Dhan Vikas Kendras for MFP value-addition; link FRA with NRLM to enhance tribal incomes.
- **Conservation by co-management:** Treat **Indigenous peoples as stewards and co-managers**, integrate **indigenous knowledge** in conservation plans.
- **In-situ development:** Prioritise provisioning of health, schooling, water, electrification, market access and mobility to enable **sustainable co-existence**.
- **Conditional fiscal incentives:** Link central/state transfers to measurable FRA implementation and co-management outcomes.

Conclusion

India's tribal development represents a transformation from marginalization to empowerment. There is a need for moving from a welfare approach to one of **community empowerment, co-governance, and rights-based development** to ensure effective legal implementation.

4.2. TRANSGENDER PERSONS (PROTECTION OF RIGHTS) AMENDMENT ACT, 2026

Why in the news?

The President gave assent to the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Act, 2026 which aims to **amend the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019.**

Key Changes in Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Act, 2026

Aspects	Detail
Revised Definition of Transgender Persons	• A person having **socio-cultural identities (kinner, hijra, aravani, jogta or eunuch), biological variations**, including those forced to outwardly **present transgender identity through mutilation, emasculation, castration, surgical, chemical or hormonal procedures.** • It **excludes self-perceived gender identities** or sexual orientations. • It omits Section 4(2) of 2019 Act, **removing the legal recognition of self-determination**.
Issue of Certificate of Identity	• **District Magistrate** will **issue the certificate** after examining the **recommendation of a designated medical board.**
Verification Authority	• Establishes a **Medical board** (**headed by a Chief Medical Officer (CMO) or Deputy CMO**) to assist authorities in verifying transgender identity. ○ Under **2019 Act**, a person could obtain a Certificate of Identity from **District Magistrate** based on **self-perceived identity**, without any medical examination.
Change in Gender	• **Concerned medical institution** must furnish information regarding gender change surgery to the District Magistrate (DM).
National Council for Transgender Persons	• Modifies the composition to **ensure representation from State Governments and UTs on a rotational basis,** one each from North, South, East, West and North-East regions. • **Representatives** must now have a **minimum rank of Director in the relevant Ministry** or Department.
Offences and Penalties	Bill **adds certain offences**. • **Kidnapping and causing grievous hurt or severe injury** to force a person to assume a transgender identity. • **Forcing a person to present as a transgender person** and engage in begging, servitude or bonded labour will be punishable.

Significance of Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Act, 2026

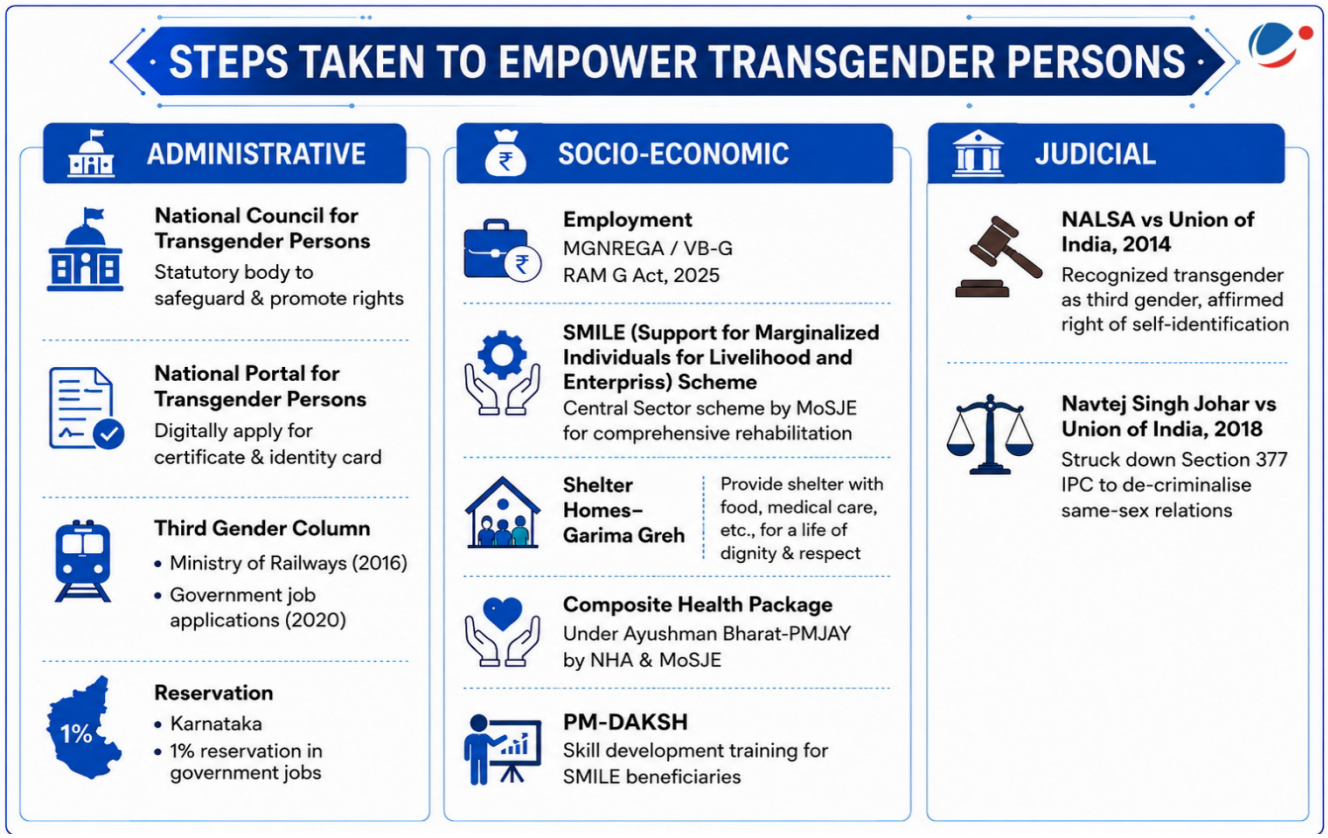
- **Better Implementation:** Revised definition and identification process may reduce ambiguity in 2019 Act.
- **Stronger Safeguards: Graded punishments** for serious crimes strengthen protection against exploitation and violence.
- **Protects constitutional principle of dignity and bodily autonomy:** Penalises forced identity change and bodily harm.

Issues associated with Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Act, 2026

- **Identification and Certification Complexity:** Replaces self-identification with institutional verification.
- **Narrow Definition:** Excludes trans-persons, non-binary and gender-queer persons from legal protection.
- **Bureaucratic Hurdles**: Medical board approval and DM certification may cause delays/exclusion.
- **Medical Gatekeeping:** Surgery/hormonal treatment linked to recognition, affecting autonomy under Article 21.
- **Legal disparity:** Lower punishment for sexual abuse of transgender (2 years) than for rape of cisgender women**.**

Other Issues associated with Transgenders in India

- **Data Deficiency:** Underreporting due to societal prejudice, lack of clear definition of transgender. 2011 Census estimated 4.8 lakh transgender persons.
- **Educational Exclusion:** Literacy rate only 56.1% among transgenders, as against national average of 74.04 %. (Census 2011)
- **Economic Marginalization: ~96%** of transgender persons face **discrimination in employment,** with **only 6%** engaged in **formal sector jobs**. (NHRC 2018)
- **Healthcare Barriers: ~27% reportedly denied medical services** due to their gender identity (NALSA).
  - HIV prevalence among transgenders is 3.8% (≈20× national average).
- **Human Rights Violations:** Trans persons face physical, sexual, and verbal abuse due to widespread trans-phobia and institutional discrimination.

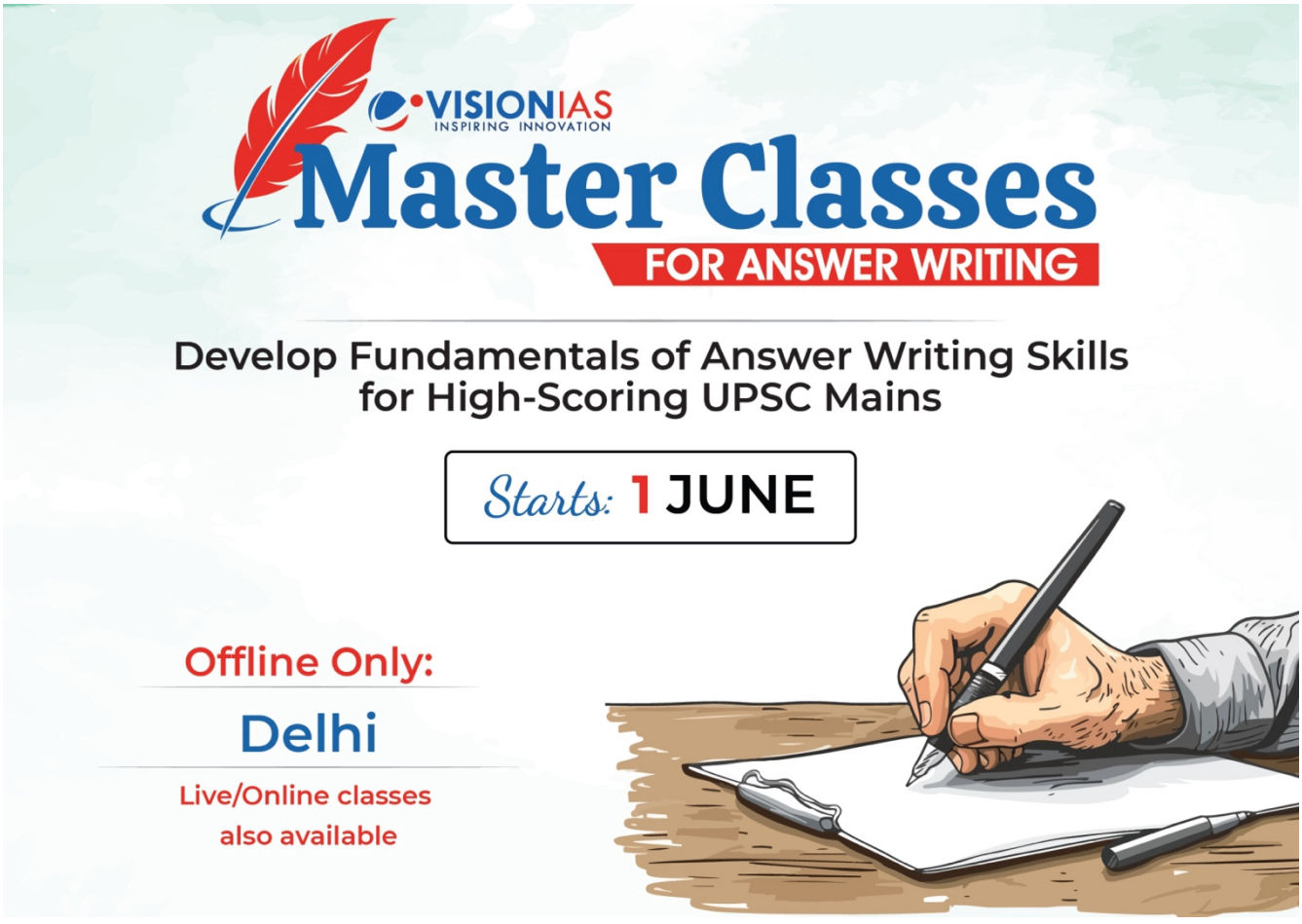

STEPS TAKEN TO EMPOWER TRANSGENDER PERSONS
ADMINISTRATIVE
National Council for Transgender Persons
Statutory body to safeguard & promote rights
National Portal for Transgender Persons
Digitally apply for certificate & identity card
Third Gender Column
Ministry of Railways (2016)
Government job applications (2020)
Reservation
1%
Karnataka
1% reservation in government jobs
SOCIO-ECONOMIC
Employment
MGNREGA / VB-G RAM G Act, 2025
SMILE (Support for Marginalized Individuals for Livelihood and Enterpriss) Scheme
Central Sector scheme by MoSJE for comprehensive rehabilitation
Shelter Homes– Garima Greh
Provide shelter with food, medical care, etc., for a life of dignity & respect
Composite Health Package
Under Ayushman Bharat-PMJAY by NHA & MoSJE
PM-DAKSH
Skill development training for SMILE beneficiaries
JUDICIAL
NALSA vs Union of India, 2014
Recognized transgender as third gender, affirmed right of self-identification
Navtej Singh Johar vs Union of India, 2018
Struck down Section 377 IPC to de-criminalise same-sex relations

Way ahead

- **Regular Survey:** Conduct a **national survey or Census update on transgender population** for evidence linked policy making.
- **Legal Reforms: Align with Yogyakarta Principles** (YP) by recognising gender self-identification, without mandating any medical procedures.
  - YP address the broad range of **human rights standards** and their application to issues of sexual orientation and gender identity.
- **Economic Empowerment**: Promote diversity hiring, tax incentives, self-employment and SHGs for livelihoods.
- **Policy Reforms**: Supreme Court formed Committee to formulate a **National Equal Opportunity Policy for Transgender persons** in **Jane Kaushik v. Union of India & Ors.**
  - **Tamil Nadu** launched **State Policy for Transgender People** to protect rights of transgender people in education, employment, healthcare, housing and safety.
- **Others: Awareness** e.g. anti-stigma campaigns, LGBTQIA+ inclusive medical training, mental health services, etc.

Conclusion

Achieving **substantive equality** for transgender persons calls for harmonising legal frameworks with constitutional guarantees, international standards, and community needs. Periodic surveys, evidence-based policymaking, and inter-ministerial coordination are critical for upholding a **rights-based approach.**



4.3. ELDERLY CARE AT A GLANCE

Elderly Care

Key Data and Facts

1. India's Elderly Population (60+): 104 million (8.6%) in Census 2011; projected 230 million (15%) by 2036 and ~20% by 2050.

2. 80+ population: Expected to grow by 279% (2022–2050) (UNFPA).

3. Regional Disparities: Higher ageing in southern states, Himachal Pradesh, and Punjab. E.g. estimated Kerala: 13% (2011) → 23% (2036)

4. Feminization of Ageing: 1,065 elderly women/ 1,000 men; women form 58% of elderly, 54% of them are widows.

5. Global Trend: Elderly population to rise from 1 billion (2020) to 2.1 billion (2050); two-thirds will live in LMICs.

Constitutional Provisions, Legislative Measures and Policy Measures

1. Constitutional Provisions

- **Article 41:** State shall make provisions for right to work, to education, and to public assistance in old age.
- **7th Schedule:** Covers old-age pension, social security, insurance, social planning.

2. Legislative Measures

- **Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007:** 2019 Amendment mandates maintenance of parents by children/heirs.
- **NALSA (Legal Services to Senior Citizens) Scheme, 2016**

3. Policy Measures

- **National Policy for Older Persons (NPOP), 1999**
- **National Programme for the Health Care for the Elderly (NPHCE):** preventive, curative, and rehabilitative treatment.

Indian Initiatives and Global Initiatives

1. Indian Initiatives

- **Pradhan Mantri Vaya Vandana Yojana (2015):** Senior citizens pension scheme.
- **Atal Vayo Abhyudaya Yojana (AVYAY):** Integrated Program for Senior Citizens.
- **Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana:** Assisted-living devices and support to BPL senior citizens.
- **Senior Able Citizens for Re-Employment in Dignity (SACRED portal):** Connects senior citizens with private-sector jobs.
- **The Senior Ageing Growth Engine (SAGE) initiative:** Promotion of senior care products and services.
- **Others:** Indira Gandhi Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOAPS); Vayoshreshtha Samman; Sugamya Bharat Abhiyaan); Geriatric Caregivers Training

2. Global Initiatives

- **UN Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (2002):** Promotes better quality of life for older adults.
- **WHO Global Strategy (2016-2020):** Focuses on healthy aging and age-friendly environments.
- **UN Decade of Healthy Ageing (2021-2030)**
- **Japan "Healthy Japan 21 Program"** Promotes active ageing
- **WHO's Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities (GNAFCC): Kozhikode,** Kerala made a member

Challenges and Way Forward

1. Challenges

- **Health:** Mental health stigma (dementia, Alzheimer's), rising disabilities, inadequate geriatric care, and urban-rural healthcare gaps.
- **Economic:** Inadequate social security, rising living/medical costs, and limited savings.
- **Social:** Weak family support, isolation, neglect, and loneliness.
- **Digital divide:** Low digital literacy, accessibility issues, and technology adoption barriers.
- **Infrastructure:** Lack of elderly-friendly Public spaces and transport; under-developed care economy.

2. Way Forward

- **Healthy Ageing and Silver economy:** Leverage seniors' experience. E.g. Kerala Senior Citizen Commission.
- **Preventive Healthcare:** Expand Geriatric care and health literacy
- **Social Empowerment:** Elder for elderly model (peer support groups), community sensitization.
- **Economic empowerment:** Promote re-skilling, re-employment.

Conclusion

India's silver economy is valued at ~₹73,000 Crore (2024). Capturing this potential requires transforming senior care into a regulated sector through public-private collaboration, targeted policy reforms, and strict inter-ministerial convergence to ensure efficient, comprehensive implementation.

4.3.1. INTER-GENERATIONAL COMMUNICATION GAP

Why in the News?

The report, **'Understanding Intergenerational Dynamics & Perceptions on Ageing',** released by **HelpAge India** highlights the recent demographic shift and evolving family structures have transformed intergenerational dynamics.

Key Findings

- **Negative Perceptions of Ageing**: 54% of elders associate ageing with negative feelings, primarily loneliness (47%).
- **Youth vs. Elder Reality**: Youth associate elders with loneliness (56%), dependence (48%), and wisdom (51%), but underestimate their emotional distress depth.
- **Emotional Disconnect**: Despite frequent daily contact (66% elders, 61% youth), elders feel "told the plan, not asked," indicating poor listening.
- **Digital Divide**: Only 41% of elders own smartphones, 13% use social media. Many find technology confusing (66%) or fear errors (51%).
- **Digital Teaching Challenges**: Youth teach elders technology (54% children, 52% grandchildren) but perceive them as disinterested (78%) or forgetful (66%). Elders cite youth impatience (71%) and rushed explanations (49%).
- **Shared Old Age Fears**: Both generations fear loneliness (68% elders, 69% youth), poor health (61% elders, 67% youth), and financial insecurity (58% elders, 62% youth).
- **Family Care Priority:** 88% of youth and 83% of elders prefer family-based elder care.
- **Geographic Variations**: Non-metro cities show stronger intergenerational bonds than metro areas with faster lifestyles.

Key Reasons that Disrupt Intergenerational Communications

- **Generational Gap Perception Index**: Reveals that the disconnection is shaped more by education, dependence, and emotional distance than by age alone.
- **Communication Barriers**: Both elders (76%) and youth (74%) identify busy youth schedules as the top barrier to interaction.
- **Comfort Levels**: It varies by topic and relationship, i.e., discussions on "life advice" are moderately comfortable for both groups, while "career or education plans" are least comfortable.

Recommendations on fostering effective Intergenerational Communications

- **Aging Sensitization**: To be included as curricula in schools/colleges fostering empathy among youths regarding emotional realities of aging.
- **Youth-Led Training Initiatives**: Establishing "Digital Buddy" programs to pair tech-savvy youth with elders for patient digital learning.
- **Community-based elder support centres**: Offering holistic services, including emotional counselling, etc.
- **Intergenerational Programs**: Like "Wisdom Exchange" programs where elders share traditional skills while youth offer modern knowledge. E.g. Goodfellows

Conclusion

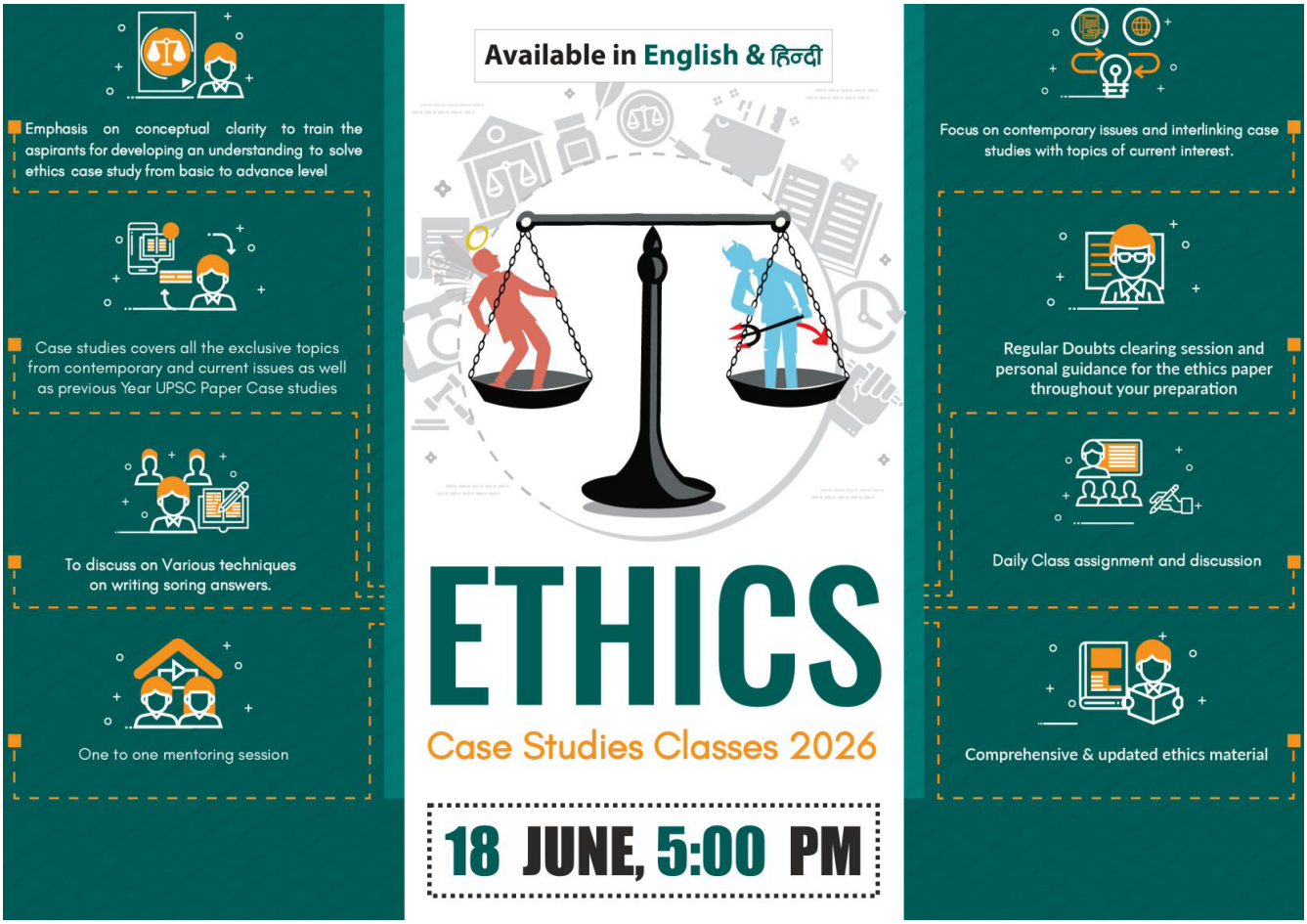
Despite frequent contact, intergenerational disconnect persists due to busy schedules and digital divides. Bridging gaps requires empathy education and community-based intergenerational exchange initiatives.

4.4. KEYWORDS

Keywords				
Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)	Erosion of identity	Triple health burden	Adi Karmayogi Abhiyan	Janjatiya Gaurav
Forced Displacement	Transgender Persons	Yogyakarta Principles (gender identity)	substantive equality	Feminization of Aging
Healthy Ageing	Silver Economy	Community-based elder support		

4.5. PRACTICE QUESTION

The transition from top-down bureaucratic welfare to decentralized, community-led co-governance is essential for actualizing the true spirit of tribal empowerment." In this context, evaluate how the 'Adi Karmayogi Abhiyan' can democratize development.			
Introduction	Body Part 1	Body Part 2	Conclusion
Introduce with data related to status of tribal population in India such as high poverty and lack of access to basic public services etc.	Highlight the issues with centralized approach to tribal development briefly such as one-size-fits-all, inefficiencies in last-mile delivery etc.	Explain the key provisions of 'Adi Karmayogi Abhiyan' contextualized with linking promotion of tribal leadership and benefits associated like providing local solutions etc.	Conclude with highlighting a rights-based approach to tribal empowerment and suggest ways for effective implementation such as social audits etc.


Emphasis on conceptual clarity to train the aspirants for developing an understanding to solve ethics case study from basic to advance level
Case studies covers all the exclusive topics from contemporary and current issues as well as previous Year UPSC Paper Case studies
To discuss on Various techniques on writing soring answers.
One to one mentoring session
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5. EDUCATION

5.1. 5 YEARS OF NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY (NEP)

Why in the News?

National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 completed **5 years.**

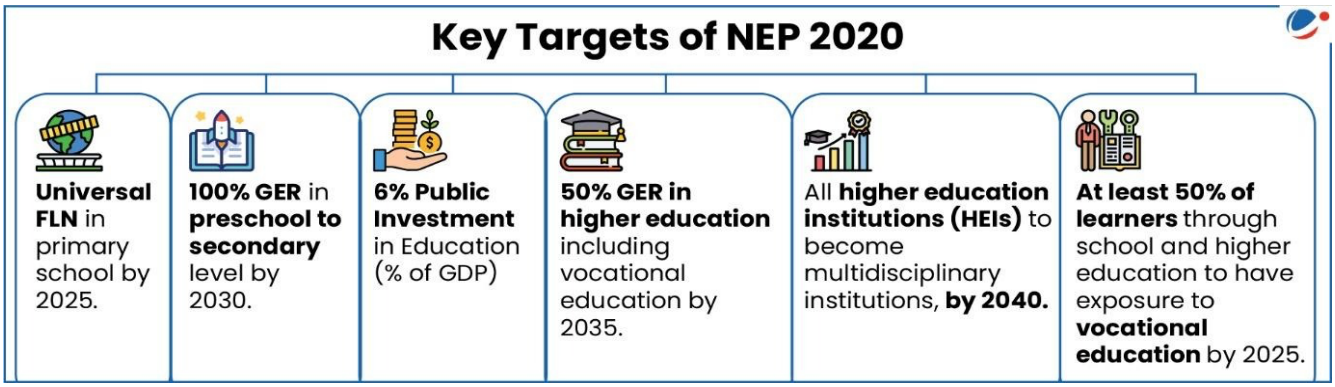
About NEP 2020

- India's **third** education policy **post-independence (**first 2 policies in **1968** and 1986 modified in 1992**).**
  - It was drafted on the recommendations of **Kasturirangan Committee.**
- **Fundamental Principles of NEP**
  - **Emphasis on Conceptual Understanding:** Rather than rote learning.
  - **Use of Technology:** In teaching and learning, removing language barriers, access for Divyang students.
  - **'Light but tight' Regulatory Framework:** Ensure integrity, transparency, and resource efficiency.
  - **Respect for diversity**: Inclusion of local context in all curriculum, pedagogy, and policy.
  - **Equity and Inclusion**: For unprivileged sections.
  - **Research:** Essential for outstanding education and development.
  - **Continuous Review of Progress:** Based on sustained research and regular assessment.

Key Focus Areas of NEP 2020

School Education	
Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)	• **National Curricular and Pedagogical Framework for Early Childhood Care and Education (NCPFECCE)** for children up to age of 8.
Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN)	• **Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing (DIKSHA)-** a national platform for school education providing digital learning resources in **133 Indian languages.**
New Pedagogical & Curricular Structure	• **5+3+3+4** design and **National Curricular Framework for School Education (**NCFSE) by NCERT.
Multilingualism	• **Medium of instruction until at least Grade 5** (preferably Grade 8 and beyond) in **local language.**
Assessment Reforms	• National Assessment Centre, **PARAKH (Performance Assessment, Review, and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development)-** a **standard-setting body** for student assessment and evaluation.
Teachers	• **Pupil-teacher ratio (PTR) under 30:1** at each school level. • Strengthening **Teacher Eligibility Tests (TETs).** • Each teacher to participate in at least **50 hours of Continuous Professional Development** every year.
Higher Education	
Quality Universities and Colleges	• **3 or 4 year Undergraduate degree courses** with **multiple exit options.** • **Academic Bank of Credit (ABC)** to digitally store academic credits earned from various recognized HEIs.
Teacher Education	• **SWAYAM/DIKSHA** for online training of teachers. • **National Mission for Mentoring** offers access to quality mentoring from experienced professionals for teachers.
Regulatory Transformation	• Umbrella institution, i.e., **Higher Education Commission of India (HECI),** with four independent verticals.
Other Key Areas	• **National Committee for the Integration of Vocational Education (NCIVE)** • Adult Education and Lifelong Learning

	• Promotion of Indian Languages, Arts and Culture • Technology Use and Integration through an autonomous body, the **National Educational Technology Forum (NETF)**, etc.


Key Targets of NEP 2020
Universal FLN in primary school by 2025.
100% GER in preschool to secondary level by 2030.
6% Public Investment in Education (% of GDP)
50% GER in higher education including vocational education by 2035.
All higher education institutions (HEIs) to become multidisciplinary institutions, by 2040.
At least 50% of learners through school and higher education to have exposure to vocational education by 2025.

Key Achievements of National Educational Policy 2020

- **School education**
  - **Scale: 14.71 lakh schools; 24.69 crore students (UDISE+ 2024-25)**
  - **Decline in School dropout rates**: Preparatory stage (3.7% to 2.3%), Middle stage (5.2% to 3.5%), and Secondary stage (10.9% to 8.2%) in comparison with the previous year. (UDISE+ 2024-25)
  - Total number of **teachers** has crossed the **1 crore** mark in **2024–25** and **Pupil-Teacher Ratios (PTRs)** surpassed NEP's recommended 1:30 ratio.
  - **Digitalization**: Increase in schools equipped with computers (38.5% to 57.2%) and internet facilities (22.3% to 53.9%) from 2019-20 to 2023-2024. (Economic Survey 2024-25)
- **Higher Education (18–23 age group)** (Economic Survey 2024-25)
  - **Increase in GER:** From 23.7% (2014-15) to 28.4% (2021-22)
  - **Increase in Total Higher Education Institutions (HEIs):** 13.8% from 2014- 15 to 2022-23.
- **Rural schools** (Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2024)
  - **FLN Directives**: Over 80% of 15,728 rural schools reported receiving FLN directives.
  - **Overall school enrolment rates among 6-14 age group:** > 95% for close to 20 years.
  - **Drop in Proportion of 15-16-year-old children not enrolled in school**: From 13.1% in 2018 to 7.9% in 2024.
- **Teacher Training: 12.97 lakh teachers** trained under **NISHTHA (Teacher Training Programme).**
- **Innovation:** Patent filings reached **92,168 in 2023–24**, with HEIs contributing 25%.
- **Inclusivity: 7.58 lakh girls** enrolled in inclusive residential schools.
- **Internationalisation:** Prestigious institutions like **Deakin and Wollongong Universities (Australia)** and **University of Southampton (UK**) have campuses in India.
- **Literacy:** Ladakh became the first fully literate administrative unit followed by Mizoram, Goa and Tripura.
- **Others: Multilingualism (National Tests** like CUET, JEE conducted in 12 Indian languages); **Monitoring and Assessment (**PARAKH Rashtriya Sarvekshan)

Hurdles in implementing NEP 2020

- **Inadequate funding:** Centre and states together spend around **4.1% of GDP** on education, lower than the recommended **6%.**
  - Financing is **heavily input driven,** focusing on infrastructure, recruitment, and material distribution falling short of improving actual learning outcomes.
- **Centre-States Policy divide**: E.g. States like Kerala, West Bengal refused to sign MoUs for PM-SHRI schools which requires full adoption of NEP.
- **Institutional Delays**: Formation of Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) as a successor to UGC and National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education delayed.
- **Over-regulation:** Regulatory framework (UGC/AICTE) currently includes over 50 regulations addressing different aspects of education and research.

- **Challenges with retention rates**: E.g., it stands 47.2% for secondary level. (UDISE+ 2024-25)
- **Other issues:**
  - Teachers **facing technical barriers** E.g. difficulties in connecting laptops to smart boards.
  - Opposition to the imposition of **Three-Language Formula**. E.g. Tamil Nadu
  - **Lack of effective learning time** (only 35 minutes per day) on Early Childhood Education

Key Government Schemes/Initiatives under NEP 2020

- **PM SHRI (PM Schools for Rising India):** Revamping over **14,500 schools (2022-2027)**
- **National Initiative for Proficiency in Reading with Understanding and Numeracy (NIPUN Bharat):** Ensures FLN by the end of Grade 3 by 2026-27.
- **One Nation One Subscription (ONOS): Central Sector Scheme** for providing **access to scholarly research articles** and **journal publication** on a single platform.
- **Initiatives for Children with Special Needs (CwSN)**: PM e-Vidya DTH Channel for Indian Sign Language; Disability Screening-PRASHAST.
- **PRERNA:** Residential program for students of classes IX - XII focusing on experiential learning.
- **ULLAS (New India Literacy Programme - NILP):** Basic Literacy and digital skilling for individuals aged 15+, who missed formal schooling.
- **Vidyanjali:** School volunteer program encouraging community engagement and corporate social responsibility (CSR) participation.
- **Rashtriya Vidya Samiksha Kendra (RVSK):** Provides **real-time data** on key performance indicators (KPIs) of school education for **evidence-based decision-making**.

Way forward on Improving the Implementation of NEP 2020

- **Outcomes-based financing (OBF)**: Funding approach where payments are **tied to achievement of pre-defined, verified outcomes,** as opposed to **inputs or activities.**
- **Stronger coordination**: Shared framework for **monitoring progress and adapting reforms** to local contexts**.**
- **Technology Enabled Learning Ecosystem:** Implemented with continuous monitoring, it can improve engagement and retention.
  - E.g., **Leveraging AI** for teachers' professional development and AI-driven personal tutors for students.
- **Integrating structured peer learning**: E.g., Mission Ankur in Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat engaging schools and communities for holistic development of primary students.
- **Capacity Building:** Investing in faculty development programs, creating a support system for teachers, and strengthening institutional leadership.
- **Decentralization and Flexibility:** Providing **flexibility to institutions** to adapt the NEP to their **specific context** fostering innovation and ownership.

Conclusion

Five years into its rollout, NEP 2020 has laid a strong foundation for transforming India's educational landscape by focusing on inclusivity, quality, and relevance. While progress in enrolment, digital access, and teacher development is commendable, increased funding, improved governance, and overcoming infrastructural and policy hurdles are critical to realizing its full potential.

5.2. SCHOOL EDUCATION IN INDIA

Why in the news?

The Comprehensive Modular Survey (CMS) on Education, which forms part of the 80th round of the **National Sample Survey (NSS)** was released.

Key Highlights of the Survey

- **Pivotal Role of Government schools:** Account for two-thirds (66.0%) of students are enrolled in rural areas compared to urban areas (30.1%).
- **Prevalence of private coaching:** 27% of students were taking/had taken private coaching,

Status of GER in School Education (Economic Survey 2025-26)

Stage (New/Old)	New NEP Structure GER (%)	Old Academic Structure GER (%)
Foundational / Primary	41.4 (Pre-Primary to Grade II)	90.9 (Grade I to V)
Preparatory / Upper Primary	95.4 (Grade III to V)	90.3 (Grade VI to VIII)
Middle / Secondary	90.3 (Grade VI to VIII)	78.7 (Grade IX & X)
Secondary / Higher Secondary	68.5 (Grade IX to XII)	58.4 (Grade XI & XII)

Constitutional Provisions related to Right to Education

- **Fundamental Right**: **Article 21A** provides right to free and compulsory education of all children (6 -14 years).
- **Fundamental Duty**: **Article 51A(k)** specifies duty of parents to provide opportunities for education to child (6-14 years)
- **Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP): Article 45** directs the state to provide early childhood care and education to children below 6 years.

Issues confronting School Education

- **Decline in government school enrolments:** Government schools' enrollment share declining (69% of all schools, enrolling ~50% of students) while Private schools rising (23% of all schools, enrolling ~39% of students). (UDISE+ 2024-25) Possible reasons are:
  - **Low public spending:** Centre and states together spend **around 4.1% of GDP** on education, lower than the **recommended 6%.**
  - **Teacher Vacancies and Quality**: Over **one million teacher vacancies** across government schools (NITI Aayog 2023); non-teaching duty burden, lack of adequate training.
  - **Infrastructure and quality Deficits**: 46,000 govt schools lack a functional toilet, 1.52 lakh schools lacked functional electricity, 43.5% lacked a functional computer. (UDISE+).
    > Only ~5% schools offer continuous Grade 1–12; single-teacher schools prevalent
- **Dropout Rates:** India has a high primary Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER), but it drops at the secondary level, highlighting transition challenges especially for migrants, girls, and rural poor.
- **Rote Learning:** Examination-oriented learning hampers experiential learning and critical thinking; rigid "one-size-fits-all" instruction instead of conceptual mastery.
- **Educational Inequality: E.g.,** Average expenditure per student on school education in rural India was estimated at ₹8,382 and ₹23,470 in urban India. (CMS education 2025)
  - Only **35%** of schools accommodate **children with special needs (CWSN), 38%** have **trained CWSN teachers,** and only **55%** of students feel **motivated to attend. (PARAKH)**
- **Poor Learning Outcomes**: 50%+ Class V students can't read two grades below level (ASER)
- **Others**: Vocational education marginalized; Lack of support for students' mental and socio-emotional health.

Way Forward

- **Structural Reforms:** Establish Composite school complexes; State/District Task Forces on School Quality; raise education spending to **6% of GDP**; CSR-based private adoption of rural schools.
- **Infrastructure & Equity:** Bridging digital divide, Early Warning Systems for dropouts and flexible re-entry paths; gender-inclusive infrastructure E.g. Sweden's disability-inclusive educational framework; India Post's **'Gyan Post'** for delivering learning materials in remote areas.
- **Pedagogy:** Implement NEP 2020; Adopt the **Teaching-at-the-Right-Level (TaRL)** methodology; localize curriculum; prioritize **competency-based assessment** over rote memory.
  - **E.**g. **Personalised Adaptive Learning (PAL)** by Nobel laureate Michael Kremer used in Andhra Pradesh's government schools led to a doubling of learning rates.
- **Regulate Private Coaching Industry:** Limited regulation and monitering and stronger in-school learning outcomes needed to reduce dependence on **shadow education**.

- **Harness Technology**: E.g. **Kenya's mShule platform** utilises SMS and AI to deliver personalised learning to children even without smartphones and internet in underserved areas.
- **Governance and Accountability:** Strengthen role of **School Management Committees (SMCs) (**community and parent-led bodies mandated by the RTE, 2009**)** to address local educational needs effectively.
- **Teachers & Students:** Ensure face-to-face-only initial teacher education degrees (Justice Verma Committee); vocational training from middle school; mandatory weekly wellness and physical activity modules.

Conclusion

The education sector in India is being strengthened through various government initiatives aligned with NEP 2020. Programs like Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan, PM SHRI and PM POSHAN are driving improvements in infrastructure, teacher training and learning outcomes.

5.3. CURRICULUM ON AI IN SCHOOLS

Why in the News?

The Department of School Education & Literacy (DoSE&L), Ministry of Education, will introduce **curriculum on Artificial Intelligence and Computational Thinking (AI & CT)** in all schools from Class 3 from the academic session 2026–27.

CBSE launched Curriculum on Computational Thinking (CT) and Artificial Intelligence (AI)

- **Implementation**: From **classes 3rd to 8th**
- **Aim:** To develop **AI-Ready learners** by building a strong foundation in logical reasoning, digital literacy, and the responsible use of technology, while nurturing innovation, critical thinking, and ethical decision-making capacities; making India a global leader in emerging domains like AI by integrating them into school education.
- **Progressive Structure**: Preparatory stage (Classes 3–5) builds foundational problem-solving through **unplugged activities**, while middle stage (Classes 6–8) introduces **hands-on AI workflows and programming**.
- It prioritizes **interdisciplinary, project-based learning** alongside critical lessons on data ethics and digital citizenship.

About AI & CT Curriculum in the schools

- Aligned with the **National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020)** and falls under the broad ambit of the **National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCF SE) 2023.**
- **Goal:** Reinforce the concepts of learning, thinking, and teaching, and gradually expand toward the idea of **"AI for Public Good".**
- **Curriculum Development:** Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) constituted an expert committee to develop the AI & CT curriculum.
- **Implementation:** Teacher training and learning-teaching materials on **National Initiative for School Heads' and Teachers' Holistic Advancement (NISHTHA) platform**.

What role can AI & CT play in Education?

- **Development of Computational Thinking:** It is a problem-solving approach that involves breaking down and solving complex problems in computer-executable ways.
  - It has **four key techniques – decomposition** (breaking down complex problem), **pattern recognition, abstraction** (focusing on important information), and **algorithms** (developing step-by-step solution to problem).
- **Foundational Skills:** Introducing AI at young age helps build critical thinking, logical reasoning, and ethical awareness, **developing meta-skills (**understand and question technology) crucial in the digital age.

- **Accessibility & Inclusion: E.g. UNICEF's Accessible Digital Textbooks initiative** uses AI to create customizable tools for **differently-abled students.**
- **Foundational Literacy and Learning Outcomes: Brazil's Letrus programme** uses AI-powered feedback to improve literacy across socioeconomic barriers.
- **Personalized Learning:** AI allows tailored learning pathways based on individual strengths and learning speeds, promoting deeper engagement.
  - E.g., South Korea developing **AI-powered digital textbooks** adjusted to proficiency levels, reducing dependence on private coaching.
- **Future Readiness:** 40% of core skills required in all jobs will change within five years. (World Economic Forum)
- **Teachers' Empowerment**: NCERT study (2024) revealed that teachers who use AI-assisted lesson planning tools were better able to identify student needs.

Challenges in Implementation of AI & CT in education

- **Risk of "Dis-education":** There is a fear that AI is **"systematically taking away the incentive to learn."** Machines answering questions instantly may lead to a loss of "inter-generational learning"
- **Teacher Upskilling:** Over one crore educators with varying degree of experience with technology need reskilling/upskilling.
- **Localization:** AI models are often not available in local languages.
- **Basic Infrastructure:** In India, approximately **9% of schools have only one teacher**, and many schools lack basic amenities like **electricity or computers.**
- **Curriculum Fluidity and Relevance:** E.g. specific skills like **"prompt engineering" may become obsolete** within a few years.
- **Psychological Impact:** Students may share things with AI chatbots, raising concerns about emotional dependency and privacy.

Current Initiatives in India

- **'Skilling for AI Readiness' (SOAR) Initiative:** By the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, enabled CBSE schools to offer AI as a **skill subject from Class 6 to 12.**
- **National Centre of Excellence in AI for Education:** Announced in Union Budget 2025–26, aligned with NEP 2020's vision of integrating technology in education**.**
- **Integration of AI in Skill India Mission (SIM): T**o prepare a future-ready workforce.
- **Skill India Digital Hub (SIDH) Platform: U**nder MSDE, offering industry-relevant courses in AI/ML, with job and entrepreneurship opportunities to empower Indian youth.
- **Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) 4.0:** Short-term training, up-skilling, and recognition of prior learning by prioritising futuristic skills like Artificial Intelligence (AI).
- **YUVA AI for ALL**: Ministry of Electronics and IT (MeitY), under the **IndiaAI Mission**, launched first-of-its-kind free course aimed to empower **1 crore** citizens with foundational AI skills.

Way Forward

- **Curriculum Focus:** Education in AI should be treated as a **basic universal skill** linked to **The World Around Us (TWAU)** and curriculum must be broad-based, inclusive, and aligned with NCF SE 2023.
- **"Unplugged" Approach:** For limited infrastructure regions, adaptable curriculum needed to teach computational thinking logic (algorithms) using physical objects rather than digital devices.
- **Interdisciplinary Integration:** AI integrated with maths, science etc. E.g. **Ceibal Computational Thinking and Intelligence programme** in Uruguay.
- **Foster "AI Entrepreneurship":** For students (Class 9-12), focus should shift from literacy to workforce readiness and entrepreneurship.
  - E.g., **Kabakoo Academies (West Africa)** provides 24/7 AI mentoring and feedback on assignments, helping youth build locally relevant businesses.
- **Ethical and Safety Protocols**: As children interact with AI, safety must be the "minimum threshold" defined by policymakers, regarding what data is shared with chatbots.

Conclusion

Embedding AI and Computational Thinking in school education marks a decisive step towards preparing India's children for a technology-driven yet human-centric future. Over time, such an approach can help democratise technological competence, reduce future skill gaps, and enable young learners to shape AI for inclusive growth and public good in a rapidly evolving world.

5.4. THREE-LANGUAGE FORMULA IN EDUCATION

Why in the News?

CBSE made the study of three languages, including **at least two native Indian languages**, compulsory for Class IX students, in alignment with NEP 2020 and the National Curriculum Framework for School Education 2023.

Related News

- **Maharashtra** Government issued Government Resolution (**GR**) making **Hindi** the **third language** in schools which was subsequently **withdrawn**.
- Some **states have opposed** the implementation of the three-language formula. E.g. Tamil Nadu

Evolution of Three Language Formula Policy

- **Constitutional provisions**: State to facilitate instruction in mother-tongue at primary stage especially for linguistic minorities (**Article 350A**) and Directives for development of Hindi language (**Article 351**).
- **National Education Policy, 1968**: Adopted 3-language formula based on the recommendation of **Kothari Commission (1964-65).**
- **1992 Programme of Action**: Mother tongue/ regional language should be the medium of communication at the **pre-school level**.
- **RTE Act, 2009**: As far as possible, the medium of instruction in school should be the child's **mother tongue.**
- **National Education Policy (NEP), 2020**: Advocates utilization of home language, mother tongue, local language, or regional language as the medium of instruction at least **until Grade 5**, but preferably **till Grade 8 and beyond.**
    - NEP 2020 requires **at least 2 of the 3 languages to be Indian** as against NEP 1968 which mandated Hindi, English, and a regional language.

Arguments for Three Language Formula

- **Fulfils Constitutional Mandate: Articles 350A and 351** make it the imperative for States to promote development of Hindi and mother tongue/ regional languages.
- **Promotes Multilingualism**: Multilingual education widens educational **access and inclusion** (e.g., tribals), improves **learning outcomes** by enhancing cognitive abilities of children and simplifying their understanding and expression. (UNESCO Report)
- **Cultural significance**: 3-language formula promotes **multiculturalism** among the diverse population of India and promotes **national unity, integrity and tolerance**.

Arguments against Three-Language Formula

- **Politicisation**: Multilingual education is seen to endanger cultural and linguistic identity. E.g., Son-of-the-soils protests in Maharashtra, Karnataka.
- **Choice v. imposition**: Learning languages should be a choice rather than imposition.
- **Overburdening Primary students**: Including three languages in primary education burdens children in an already stressed education system with basic literacy issues.
- **Implementation challenges**: Lack of qualified teachers and infrastructure, linguistically diverse states (e.g. Nagaland) have multiple languages and limited resources, etc.
    - Technology like real-time translation using AI makes learning varied languages less necessary.

Steps Taken to Promote Multilingualism in Indian Education System

- **ASMITA (Augmenting Study Materials in Indian Languages through Translation and Academic Writing) Initiative:** aims to produce 22,000 books in 22 scheduled languages over five years.
- **Bahubhasha Shabdkosh:** Aims to create a multilingual dictionary repository.
- **Real-time Translation Architecture:** led by the National Education Technology Forum (NEFT) in collaboration with Bharatiya Bhasha Samiti for developing technology for real-time translation in indian languages.
- **Bharatiya Bhasha Pustak Scheme:** Provides digital textbooks and study materials in multiple Indian languages.
- **Bhashini:** Al-led language translation system that enables people to speak in their own language while talking to speakers of other Indian languages.

Way Forward for Effective Implementation of Three Language Formula

- **Prioritizing Quality Education**: Avoid politicization of language education, provide choice of language selection and focus on improving teaching and learning outcomes.
- **Strengthening Cooperative Federalism**: Encourage dialogue between the Centre and States to ensure smooth NEP 2020 implementation and avoid funding delays.
- Aligning with **UNESCO's Multilingual Education Guidance**
  - **Data-Driven Policy**: Collect socio-linguistic and educational data for effective planning.
  - **Learning Materials & Assessments**: Develop resources in learners' languages and adapt assessments.
  - **Qualified Teachers**: Train educators fluent in both the mother tongue and official language.
  - **Community Engagement**: Involve parents, caregivers, and indigenous groups in designing effective multilingual programs.

Conclusion

Three-language formula promotes multilingualism and constitutional mandates but faces implementation challenges. Success requires depoliticization, teacher training, community engagement, and flexible state specific approaches respecting linguistic diversity.

5.5. HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA

Why in the News?

India has seen significant improvement of Indian institutions in QS World University Rankings 2026.

Key findings of ranking

- **Five-fold increase**: India grew from 11 universities in 2015 to 54 in 2026, making it the **fourth most represented country** after the US, UK, and China.
- **Leading new additions**: 8 Indian universities added this year, more than any other country.
- **Top-tier performance**: Six Indian institutions in the global top 250.
- **IIT dominance**: 12 IITs featured, with **IIT Delhi ranking highest** at 123rd globally.

Why Indian University Rankings have improved?

- **Improvement of Academic reputation:** 8 Indian universities rank among top 100 for Citations per Faculty parameter, higher than Germany, the US.
- **Good performance of Engineering and technology:** High concentration of top 100 placements in the field.
- **Infrastructure Development:** Through initiatives **like Pradhan Mantri Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (PM-USHA)**.
- **Enhanced employability**: PM Internship Scheme, National Apprenticeship Training Scheme improve job readiness.
- **Sustainability performance:** Indian universities impacting knowledge exchange, environmental research.
- **Policy reform**: NEP 2020 promotes high-quality, equitable, and inclusive higher education.

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Challenges in Higher Education

- **Low Accreditation Rate: Less than 39%** of universities nationwide accredited, largely due to **high costs** involved.
- **Lower Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER):** The current GER of **28.4% (2021-22)** falls significantly short of the **50% target (by 2035)** under NEP 2020.
- **Insufficient Research Funding:** Government expenditure on R&D is low (~**0.7% of GDP**), leading to weaker innovation outcomes in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).
- **Gap in Entrepreneurial & Innovation Skills:** Academia-industry disconnect, lack of soft skills training etc.
  - **75% of HEIs lack industry readiness (TeamLease EdTech).**
- **Outdated Curriculum:** Curricula often lack revision and updates, particularly in emerging technologies like AI.
- **Faculty Shortages: 56.2%** professor posts **vacant** in Central Universities and other HEIs (January 2025).
- **Fragmented Regulatory Framework:** Absence of a robust framework for Multidisciplinary Education and Research Universities (MERUs), hindered by multiple regulatory bodies (e.g., UGC, AICTE).
- **Regional Imbalances:** Concentration of Top Institutions in South India and Delhi. (NIRF 2025)

Way forward for improving Higher education in India

- **Industry-academia collaboration**: Through joint projects and Industry Relations Cells (IRC). Incentivize partnerships like **Telangana Academy for Skill and Knowledge (TASK).**
- **Need-based education**: **Andhra Pradesh** conducted **India's first Skill Census** in January 2025, identifying gaps and offering targeted technical education.
- **Diversified academic brand**: Invest in underrepresented disciplines and interdisciplinary degrees, merging STEM with social sciences and arts.
- **Regulatory consolidation**: Implement "light but tight" regulation through single regulator (Higher Education Commission of India) as outlined in NEP 2020.
- **Faculty autonomy**: Enable curriculum design for industry relevance, like **Gujarat's Skills4Future Programme**.
- **Enhanced funding**: Provide financing autonomy to boost Gross Enrolment Ratio, following Kerala's model.

Initiatives for Improving Higher Education

- **Infrastructure Development:**
  - **Higher Education Financing Agency (HEFA):** Finances capital assets and research infrastructure in premier institutions.
  - **National Digital Education Architecture (NDEAR) (2021):** Comprehensive digital education infrastructure.
  - **Pradhan Mantri Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (PM-USHA):** Funds state universities and colleges for quality improvement.
- **R&D:**
  - **Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF):** Seeds and promotes research across universities.
  - **Multidisciplinary Education and Research Improvement in Technical Education (MERITE) Scheme:** To improve the quality, equity and governance in technical education
  - **Scheme for Promotion of Academic and Research Collaboration (SPARC):** Facilitates partnerships between top Indian HEIs and global institutions.
  - **One Nation One Subscription (ONOS) Scheme**: Democratizes access to scholarly research.
  - **PAIR Programme**: High-ranking institutions (hubs) guide emerging ones (spokes) in research.
- **Employability:**
  - **National Credit Framework (NCrF):** Integrate academic learning with vocational education under NEP 2020
  - **PM Internship Scheme**: Provides 1 crore internships over five years.

Conclusion

India's rising global rankings reflect growing academic strength, yet challenges in accreditation, funding, and curriculum relevance persist. Realising India's vision of becoming a global knowledge hub requires sustained policy reform, industry-academia collaboration, and equitable investment in higher education.

5.6. VIKSIT BHARAT SHIKSHA ADHISHTHAN (VBSA) BILL, 2025

Why in the News?

The **Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan (VBSA) Bill, 2025,** was introduced in the Lok Sabha and referred to a joint parliamentary committee.

About Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan Bill, 2025

- **A**im: To create a **unified regulatory architecture for higher education** in India under Entry 66 of the Union List in the Seventh Schedule to the Constitution.
  - Entry 66 of the **Union list** provides for the **coordination and determination of standards in institutions** for higher education or research, and scientific and technical institutions.
- **Need for the Bill:** To simplify regulation of higher educational institutions (HEIs) and implement **NEP 2020's vision** of revamping education structure, governance, and regulation.

Major provisions of the Bill

- **Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan (VBSA):** Establish the Commission as the apex regulatory body for higher education.
  - VBSA will not control the funding of institutions.
- **Vertical Councils under VBSA**
  - **Viksit Bharat Shiksha Viniyaman Parishad** for regulation**.**
  - **Viksit Bharat Shiksha Gunvatta Parishad** for accreditation**.**
  - **Viksit Bharat Shiksha Manak Parishad** for academic standards.
- **Functions of VBSA:**
  - Providing strategic direction for higher education and research.
  - Developing a roadmap for transforming HEIs into large multi-disciplinary education and research institutions.
  - Suggesting schemes for improving the quality of education.
- **Repeal:** The University Grants Commission (UGC) Act, 1956, the All India Council for Technical Education Act (AICTE), 1987, and the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) Act, 1993.
- **Penalties:** Regulatory Council may impose penalties on HEIs for contraventions of the Act.
- **Appeals:** Against decisions of the Commission and the Councils will lie before the central government.
- **Exemption: Legal and medical education-** will continue to be regulated under separate Acts.
- **Proposed Council of Architecture (CoA):** To be established under the Architects Act, 1972 will function as a **Professional Standard Setting Body.**

Current Regulatory ecosystem for Higher education in India

- **Status**: Education is in the **concurrent list**, it is a shared responsibility of both centre and the states
  - However, technical and scientific educational institutes, research and **standards determination** are in the Union List.
- **Apex Regulatory Bodies: UGC** under the education ministry for funding, granting recognition, standard-setting, teaching, examination, and research.
  - **Professional Councils:**
    - **AICTE**: Regulates technical education (Engineering, Management, etc.).
    - **Statutory bodies** that regulate specific professions. E.g., National Medical Commission, Bar Council of India, etc.

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- **Accreditation Bodies:**
  - **NAAC (National Assessment and Accreditation Council) by UGC**: Assess institutions (Colleges/Universities) on quality parameters
  - **NBA (National Board of Accreditation)**: Under the AICTE act accredits specific technical programs. (e.g., B.Tech in Mechanical Engineering).

The Department Related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Education, Women, Children, Youth and Sports presented a report on **Autonomous Bodies** under Department of Higher Education.

- **Autonomous bodies** are **set up** either through a specific **Act of Parliament or as societies** under the Societies Registration Act, 1860.

Key Issues with Autonomous Bodies

- **National Testing Agency (NTA)**: Paper Leaks (NEET-UG), postponement (CUET), delayed results, vendor management, MCQ format of CUET not suitable for humanities and social sciences, etc.
- **NAAC**: Long and Bureaucratic process of accreditation, corruption allegations etc.
- **UGC**: Vacant position of the Chairperson, Delay in Draft UGC Regulations, 2025 finalization, Infrastructure deficit and issues with faculty recruitment.
- **Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR)**: Inadequate budget.
- **Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR)**: Non-implementation of recommendations of the Seventh Pay Commission, staff shortage etc.

Recommendations as per report

- **NTA:** Ensure transparency in paper setting, administration, timely conduct of examination, shift to pen and paper mode where necessary, nationwide blacklisting repository of fraudulent exam-vending companies, Review and overhaul the quality and structural design of the CUET etc.
- **NAAC:** Streamline accreditation process for HEIs, flexibility for institutes in tribal and rural areas etc.
- **UGC:** New Chairperson, finalization of draft regulations (include disability and caste-based harassment) etc.
- **ICHR**: Increase budget, infrastructure enhancement etc.
- **ICSSR**: Pay parity, staff appointment etc.

Issues in Higher Education Governance

- **Fragmentation of Functions**: Multiple regulators (UGC, AICTE, State Governments) often have overlapping mandates, leading to confusion and red tape.
- **Conflict of Interest:** Bodies like the UGC handle both Regulation (setting rules) and Funding (distributing grants).
- **Resource Inequity**: ~65% of the UGC budget is utilised by Central Universities, while State Universities, which handle the bulk of student enrolment, receive only 35%.
- **One-Size-Fits-All Approach**: Same rules often apply to a research-intensive university and a small teaching college, stifling innovation.
- **Faculty Shortages**: Many public HEIs report 50% vacancies, and recruitment processes are often stalled by bureaucratic or political interference.
- **Employability Gap**: Persistent lack of employable skills in technical graduates, leading to rising educated unemployment.
  - **Only ~55% of Indian graduates** are considered "**employable**."(India Skill Report 2025)
- **Research Deficit**: Public funding for research and innovation has **gradually declined**, with India spending only **~0.7% of GDP on R&D**.

Conclusion

The VBSA Bill has the potential to streamline higher education governance and align it to build a “Viksit Bharat,” provided implementation remains consultative, transparent, and student-centric.

5.7. INTERNATIONALIZATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA

Why in the News?

NITI Aayog released Report on 'Internationalization of Higher Education in India'.

Internationalization of Education

- One of the central pillars of the **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020**.
- **Aim**: Transforming India's domestic higher education ecosystem into a **globally integrated system** with:
  - Enhanced **international students and faculty ratio** in Indian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs),
  - Presence of **local campuses of top global institutions** in India,
  - Expansion of **Indian HEIs outside India**, etc.
- UGC regulations permit twinning programmes, Joint degrees and Dual degrees with foreign universities.
- **100% FDI** allowed in higher education.

Foreign Universities Establishing Campuses in India

- Under **UGC** (Setting Up and Operation of Campuses of Foreign Higher Educational Institutions in India) **Regulations (2023), 15 foreign HEIs** are expected to establish campuses in India. (Economic Survey 2025-26)
- E.g. Deakin University (Australia), Queen's University Belfast (UK) opening international branch campus in India at **GIFT City, Gujarat;** University of Southampton (UK) campus at Gurugram (Delhi NCR).

Indian Institutions Establishing Campuses Abroad

- **IIT Madras (Zanzibar, Tanzania):** The first-ever offshore campus of an IIT.
- IIT Delhi (Abu Dhabi, UAE), IIT Kharagpur (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia)

Why India needs internationalization of its higher education?

- **Outward remittances**: Increased by over **2,000%** in a decade, reaching nearly **USD 3.4 billion** in 2023–24 (~ **53% of India's Union higher education budget**).
- **Democratization of Quality: 97% of Indian students are studying in Indian HEIs** and can avail **high-quality, world-class education** that aligns with global standards with Indian campuses of global HEIs.
- **Global Readiness:** By embedding in**ternational benchmarks, faculty exchanges, and global curricula** into Indian campuses, India can prepare its **workforce to be "world-ready" and competitive** in the global talent pool.
- **Other: Harnessing the diaspora, improving the global rankings** (e.g. higher international student and faculty ratios), **soft power projection**, etc.

Challenges in Internationalization of Indian Higher Education

- **Brain Drain**: Outbound student numbers rose from 6.85 lakh (2016) to 18 lakh+ (2025). (Economic Survey 2025)
  - For every international student entering India, **28 Indian students study abroad**.
- **Resource Constraints**: Limited capacity of Indian HEIs to raise budget for expansion.
- **Infrastructure Gaps**: E.g. less than 15% of Indian HEIs currently meet international expectations for campus facilities, housing, and safety protocols.
- **Regulatory Bottlenecks**: E.g. Complicated visa procedures, documentation burdens, and a lack of a fast-track academic visa category.

Policy Recommendations by NITI Aayog

- **Governance:** Establish an **Inter-Ministerial Task Force** and designate **Country Centres of Excellence (CoEs)** in 54 Central Universities to serve as nodal points for specific nations.
- **Regulation:** Revise the **NIRF criteria** to include internationalization metrics and simplify the **visa documents**.

- **Finance:** Launch the **Bharat Vidya Kosh** (a $10 billion sovereign research fund) and the **Vishwa Bandhu flagship scholarship** to attract global researchers and master's students.
- **Branding & Outreach:** Develop the **Bharat ki AAN (Alumni Ambassador Network)** to engage Indian-origin alumni as global brand ambassadors and revamp the "**Study in India**" portal into a one-stop digital solution.
- **Curriculum & Culture:** Integrate **Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS)** with global academic standards and mandate industry-relevant internships and reflective writing modules in degree programmes.

Conclusion

Internationalizing higher education is vital for India to curb costly outward remittances, counter brain drain, and project soft power. With the NEP 2020 framework, strategic regulation, funding, and branding can transform India into a globally competitive knowledge destination.

5.8. KEYWORDS

Keywords				
Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER)	Rote Learning	Teaching-at-the-Right-Level (TaRL) methodology	Personalised Adaptive Learning (PAL)	Foundational Skills
Dis-education	Three Language Formula	Multilingualism	learning outcomes	Accreditation
multi-disciplinary education	Employability	Internationalization of Education	Democratization of Quality Education	

5.9. PRACTICE QUESTION

"An input-driven financing model disproportionately prioritizes physical infrastructure over actual learning outcomes." Highlighting the issues associated with learning outcomes, suggest how systemic gaps be rectified to fulfill the core mandates of NEP 2020.			
Introduction	Body Part 1	Body Part 2	Conclusion
Introduce with data highlighting gaps in learning outcomes provided by UDISE or ASER.	Highlight the reasons behind learning outcome gaps such as focus of policies and schemes on enrollment, lack of personalized learning, etc.	Suggest measures for improving learning outcomes such as use of technology like AI to personalize learning, Outcomes-Based Financing (OBF) etc.	Conclude with linkage with NEP 2020 and focus on holistic education.

6. HEALTH

6.1. MENTAL HEALTH AT A GLANCE

Mental Health

Mental Health is the state of well-being enabling individuals to cope with life's stresses; includes emotional, psychological, and social well-being.	**Mental Disorders:** Conditions like depression, anxiety, schizophrenia, eating disorders, and addictions.

Key Data and Facts

10.6% of adults in India suffer from mental disorders. (National Mental Health Survey 2015-16)	**70-92%** Treatment gap, contributing to 2443 disability-adjusted life years (DALYs) per 10,000 population. (NMHS)	Individuals aged 25-44 years most affected by mental illnesses
Global: 1 in 8 people (970 million) live with a mental disorder (WHO).	Productivity loss, absenteeism, economic loss estimated at USD 1.03 trillion (2012-2030) (WHO).	Indian youth (18-34 years) rank 60th of 84 countries in mental well-being, well-being, compared to 49th for those aged 55+. (Global Mind Health 2025 report)

Impact of Poor Mental Health

Physical Health: Depression increases risk of cardiovascular and other chronic diseases. (Lancet)	**Social Strain:** Causes isolation and relationship/ communication difficulties.	**Social Stigma:** Shame, stereotypes, and supernatural beliefs deter help-seeking and treatment.	**Youth Vulnerability:** Linked to poor academic performance, substance abuse, and self-harm.

Key initiatives to support Mental healthcare

- **Mental Healthcare Act, 2017:** Decriminalizes suicide; guarantees affordable mental healthcare.
- **National Health Policy, 2017:** Expands specialists and community/digital mental healthcare.
- **Ayushman Arogya Mandirs:** Integrates mental health into primary healthcare.
- **National Mental Health Programme (NMHP):** Includes REDS (Reinforcing, Enhancing, Developing, and Strengthening) pathway for suicide prevention.
- **District Mental Health Programme:** Outpatient care, psychosocial support, ambulance services.
- **Union Budget 2026–27:** NIMHANS-2, upgraded Ranchi/Tezpur institutes as Regional Apex Institutions, and Emergency & Trauma Care Centres in district hospitals.
- **Others:** TeleMANAS, Manodarpan, KIRAN Helpline, mental health covered under PMJAY.

Challenges and Way Forward

Challenges

- **Treatment Access:** Stigma, high cost, and prolonged treatment deter care.
- **Workforce Shortage:** Only 0.75 psychologists per lakh population.
- **Regional disparity:** Inadequate resources in rural and remote areas.
- **Rehabilitation issues:** Inadequate community-based rehabilitation facilities.
- **Emerging challenges:** Climate change, disasters, urbanization, digital addiction, workplace stress etc.

Way Forward

- **WHO Guidance (2025) Areas for Reform:** Strengthening governance, Community-based services, Workforce development, Person-centered interventions, Addressing social determinants of mental health.
- **Whole-of-community approach:** Integrate mental health into education and workplace policies.
- **Evidence-based interventions:** Research and data collection, proportional budget allocation.
- **Others:** Social Sensitization and improving affordability.

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6.2. DRINKING WATER AND SANITATION

Why in the News?

WHO and UNICEF report on Progress on Household Drinking Water and Sanitation 2000–2024 focused on **inequalities in access to Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)**.

Key Findings	
Global	**India**
• **1 in 4 (2.1 billion people) lack access to safely managed drinking water** • **Population lacking basic hygiene services: Decreased** twice as fast in **rural areas** than in **urban** areas; **increased in low-income countries.** • **Access to safe sanitation** now **58%**. • **Gendered burden:** Emerging evidence as **women spend more time fetching water.** • **Open defecation:** In low-income countries remain **4 times higher than the global average**.	• **Sanitation coverage**: **Near universal access to basic sanitation,** but **slippage in use** and **quality of waste management** • **Drinking water**: Expanded **household tap water connections**. ○ **Safely managed drinking water** remains below universal levels. • **Equity issues**: Marginalised groups (tribal populations, poorest) lag in access.

Significance of Drinking Water and Sanitation

- **Improves public health:** By reducing water-borne diseases such as diarrhoea, cholera and typhoid.
  - Enhances nutrition and child development by lowering disease burden.
  - Improves productivity and reduces healthcare expenditure.
- **Gender:** Promotes women's dignity, safety and participation in education and employment.
- **Contributes to SDG 3 (Health), SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation).**

Persistent Challenges

- **Coverage vs. Use Gap:** SBM achieved near-universal toilet construction, but behavioural slippage (non-use and poor maintenance) reduces effectiveness of the initiative.
- **Regional disparities:** Especially in tribal, hilly and remote areas which are structurally last-mile.
- **Gender Burden:** Women spend disproportionate time fetching water; menstrual health concerns affecting work productivity and school attendance for adolescent girls.
- **Water quality concerns:** Increasing water pollution concerns. **E.g. arsenic, fluoride, iron contamination.**

WASH Initiatives in India

- **Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM)**: Elimination of open defecation; improved sanitation awareness; Enhanced dignity and safety for women, reduced child mortality.
- **Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM): Functional Household Tap Connection (FHTC)** to every **rural household;** focus on **quantity, quality and regularity** of water supply; Community participation through **Village Water and Sanitation Committees; Jal Sanchay Jan Bhagidari.**
  - Rural India is **saving 55 million hours per day on fetching water,** enabling increased workforce participation and productivity, especially from women
- **Manual for Disaster Management Plan (DMP):** By Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation to ensure safety, uninterrupted supply and minimum loss of Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) assets and services.

Way Forward

- **Outcome-linked targeting:** Synchronising Beneficiary Identification with Outcomes. E.g. behaviour change communication for marginalised communities
- **Evidence-based Policy Implementation**: Granular, disaggregated beneficiary databases (caste, gender, geography) needed to ensure targeted policy implementation.

- **Local-level Interventions**: E.g. Gram Panchayat-level **WASH audits** linking beneficiary access to water quality testing and ODF-sustainability certification.

Conclusion

Achieving universal and equitable WASH access requires moving beyond infrastructure creation towards sustained usage, quality assurance and inclusion, ensuring health, dignity and sustainable development for all.

6.3. KASHI DECLARATION FOR DRUG-FREE INDIA

Why in the News?

As part of broader **Mera Yuva (MY) Bharat framework**, the **Youth Spiritual Summit** laid the foundation for a **national youth-led anti-drug campaign** with adoption of the **Kashi Declaration**.

About Kashi Declaration

- Sets a 5-year **roadmap** for De-Addiction Movement.
- Affirms a **national consensus** to treat substance abuse as a **multi-faceted public health** and **societal challenge**.
- **Approach to be followed**:
  - Proposes i**nstitutional mechanisms** for **multi-ministerial coordination,** including the formation of a **Joint National Committee**, **annual progress reporting**, and a national platform for linking affected individuals to support services.
  - **Integration** of spiritual, cultural, educational, and technological efforts to prevent addiction.

Key Provisions to reduce Drug Abuse

Constitutional Provisions

- **Article 47 (DPSP):** Directs the State to endeavour to prohibit intoxicating drinks and drugs injurious to health.

Legal Provisions

- The Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985
- The Prevention of Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1988
- National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction (NAPDDR), 2018-25
- Nasha Mukt Bharat Abhiyaan (NMBA), 2020

Status of Drug-abuse in India

- As per **National Survey on Substance Use, 2019**
  - **Prevalence of Alcohol Use: 14.6%** between the age of **10 and 75 years** are current users of alcohol**.**
  - **Cannabis and Opioids** (e.g., heroin) are the next commonly used substances in India.
- **15.1%** of students reported lifetime substance use, **10.3%** reported past-year use of psychoactive substances. (National Medical Journal of India study)

Driving factors behind Drug Abuse

- **Social Factors:** E.g., Peer pressure, family conflicts, and social isolation
- **Economic Factors**: E.g., Unemployment and poverty
- **Academic/Work Stress**: E.g., High pressure in education and jobs increases risk, especially among youth.
- **Psychological Factors**: E.g., Mental health issues like anxiety and depression
- **Availability**: India is located Between Golden crescent and golden triangle, Growth of **online and darknet-enabled trafficking networks**.

Way Forward

- **Early Prevention & Awareness Campaigns:** Implement school-based preventive education focusing on life-skills training to build informed, resilient children.
- **Rehabilitation:** Policy response shift from punishment to care, distinguish between users needing treatment and traffickers deserving severe penalties.
- **Expand infrastructure:** Targeted scaling up of de-addiction centres, community-based rehabilitation, and harm reduction services.
- **Address social stigma:** Public health campaigns should normalise help-seeking behaviour and frame addiction as a health issue, not a moral failing.

Conclusion

Drug abuse is not merely a law enforcement problem but a **complex public health, social, and developmental challenge**, demanding a whole-of-society response. The Kashi Declaration signals a paradigm shift: from punitive approaches toward **prevention, rehabilitation, and community-led healing**, anchored in India's cultural and spiritual ethos.

6.4. KEYWORDS

Keywords				
Mental health	Social Stigma	Whole-of-community approach	Community-based Mental Health services	Crude Birth Rate
Infant Mortality Rate (IMR)	Sex Ratio at Birth	Institutional Deliveries	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)	Kashi Declaration for Drug-Free India

6.5. PRACTICE QUESTION

"The alarming decline in the mental well-being of Indian young adults (18–34 years) highlights a profound shift in modern socio-cultural and economic environments". Analyze the underlying societal factors that render the productive age group highly vulnerable to mental health disorders. Suggest Measures to tackle the menace.

Introduction	Body Part 1	Body Part 2	Conclusion
Introduce with data showing growing mental health issues among youth E.g. suicides etc.	Analyse the societal factors such as urbanization, workplace stress, social media that contribute in degrading mental health of youth.	Suggest measures such as policy and legal reforms to be more responsive, fighting the social stigma, improving access to professional help etc.	Conclude with highlighting the demographic dividend and significance of youth in nation-building.

7. NUTRITION, POVERTY, DEVELOPMENTAL ISSUES

7.1. URBANIZATION AT A GLANCE

Urbanization

- **Urbanization:** Rising share of population living in urban areas. In India, includes statutory towns with ≥5,000 population, density ≥400/km², and 75% male non- agricultural workers.
- Cities act as cultural melting pots, creating a composite culture with both opportunities and challenges.

Key Data and Facts

Urban population: **36.87%** (World Bank, 2024); **31.1%** (Census 2011)	Indian Population living in Cities (**40.3%**), Towns (**43.8%**) and rural (**15.9%**) (UN-DESA World Urbanization Prospects 2025)	**40%** Urban population by **2036** (World Bank) and **50%** by **2047**.	**Growth Engines:** Urban areas contribute ~**70%** of GDP. (World Bank); **15** major cities contribute **30%** of India's GDP	Cities house **45%** of the world's population (~8.2 billion).

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

Urban development is a State Subject under **Article 243W.**	**74th Amendment Act, 1992:** Entrusts Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) with functions under Twelfth Schedule.

Drivers of Urbanization

Economic: Industrialization, service-sector growth; Agglomeration economies; better employment opportunities.	**Social:** Rural-to-urban migration; Better public services; quality of life; social mobility, individualism, modernization.	**Government Policies:** Urban-centric growth (e.g. SEZs, Smart Cities, AMRUT); Expansion of municipal boundaries.

Challenges of Urbanization

• **Unplanned Growth:** Urban sprawl, slums, environmental degradation, and declining quality of life.	• **Social:** Ghettoization, caste/religion/class segregation, urban poverty, informality, and social isolation.	• **Infrastructure Deficit:** Congestion; inadequate housing, transport, maintenance, and civic services.
• **Governance inefficiencies:** Weak ULBs, rigid regulations, low revenues, and restrictive FSI norms.	• **Definitional gap:** India is far more urban in economic and functional terms than official definitions suggest. (Economic Survey 2025-26) Towns represent a "missing middle" in urban policy.	• **Environmental:** 66 of the world's 100 most polluted cities are in India (World Air Quality Report 2025)

Major Initiatives for Urban Development and Way Forward

Major Initiatives for Urban Development

- **Atal Mission for Rejuvenation & Urban Transformation 2.0 (AMRUT 2.0)**
- **Swacch Bharat Mission Urban 2.0**
- **Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana - Urban 2.0**
- **PM SVANidhi Scheme** (Pradhan Mantri Street Vendor's AtmaNirbhar Nidhi)
- **Others:** PM e-Bus Seva Scheme, Municipal bonds, City Economic Regions.
- **UN SDG 11** (Sustainable Cities and Communities)

Way Forward

- **Balanced urbanization:** Develop Tier-II/III cities, towns, rural areas to reduce distress migration.
- **Sustainable Planning:** Mixed land-use planning, Transit-Oriented Development (TOD), Preserving green and blue infrastructure.
- **Social inclusion:** expand social security, financial access, and skill development for the urban poor.
- **Governance:** Strengthen ULBs, decentralize decision-making, community participation, improve resource mobilization (e.g., property tax reforms).

7.2. MIGRATION AT A GLANCE

Migration

- **International Organisation for Migration (IOM)** defines **Migration** as the movement of people away from their place of residence to a new place of residence, either across an international border or within a state.
- **Migration (Census)** is of two types - **Migration by Birthplace** and **Migration by place of last residence.**

Status of Migration in India

45.57 crore people are migrants **(Census 2011)**

Types: Rural to rural (highest- **55%**), rural to urban **(18.9%)**, urban to rural **(15.9%)**, urban to rural **(10%)**. **(MoSPI)**

Overall migration rate is **28.9%. (PLFS 2020-21)**

Gender-wise: Male **(10.7%)** and Female **(47.9%)**; major reasons for migration- marriage for females **(86.8%)** whereas labour market opportunities for males **(22.8%)**.

Nearly one in four rural Indians **(26.8%)** was a migrant in 2020-21. **(Economic Survey 2025-26)**.

Key Challenges associated with Migration in India

Regional Disparity: Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal account for ~**48%** of outbound migrants, major destination states receive a similar share.

Declining Rural Workforce: Impacting agricultural efficiency and food supply issues.

Social Disruptions: Migrant leaves behind elderly and dependents disrupting traditional family ties.

Strain on Urban Infrastructure: Strains healthcare, education, transport, and other civic services.

Migrant Vulnerabilities: Poor housing, sanitation, social security, working conditions, and wages.

Others: Regionalism E.g. son-of-the-soil, emphasis on local language and related conflicts etc.

7.2.1. URBAN MIGRATION

Why in the News?

Research by IIT Indore highlights how **rural-to-urban migration** is reshaping daily life in cities, with shifts in work, routines, and living conditions drawing attention to the broader challenges faced by urban migrants.

Factors Influencing Migration		
	Push Factors (Reasons to Leave Origin)	**Pull Factors (Reasons to Choose Destination)**
Social & Political	• **Persecution** (ethnicity, religion, race, politics, culture). • **War,** armed conflict, **human rights violations,** political instability.	• **Peace, stability,** security of life and property. • **Liberal asylum policies** in safer countries.
Demographic & Economic	• High **unemployment**, poor labour standards. • **Economic decline,** lack of opportunities, low wages.	• **Higher wages, better jobs**, higher living standards. • **Educational opportunities** and better healthcare. • **Young labour demand** in ageing societies.
Environmental & Climate	• **Natural disasters** (floods, hurricanes, earthquakes). • **Climate change impacts** (droughts, rising seas, extreme weather).	• Pleasant climate, **safer environmental conditions**

Consequences of Urban Migration

- **Economic Consequences**
  - **Economic Growth:** Skilled migrants boost development, with seasonal and temporary migrants contributing about **10% to national GDP (UNDP).**
  - **Improved Living Standards:** Remittances raise **living standards** through housing, education and business.
  - **Economic Vulnerabilities:** Concentration in **informal sector, low wages, lack of access to social security**.
    - > **Example:** Nearly **90% of India's workforce** is in the informal sector, employing most migrant workers.
    - > **Example: Covid-19, LPG crisis amidst West Asia War** caused a homeward exodus of **migrants** in India.
- **Demographic Consequences**
  - **Population Structure:** Migration alters population balance, skewing sex ratios and reducing rural birth rates.
    - > **Example: Kottayam's sex ratio** (1040) is lower than Kerala's average (1084) due to **female outmigration.**
  - **Circular Migration**: A repetitive pattern of migration where people move to a destination for work and return to their origin once employment ends.
  - Usually seen among low-income groups seeking seasonal or short-term jobs in cities, regions, or abroad.
- **Social & Psychological Consequences**
  - **Social Change:** Migrants bring **new ideas, technology, and consumerist culture,** modernising origin areas.
  - **Social Challenges:** Discrimination based on **caste, religion, and regional origin, Language barriers, Formation of ghettos,** etc. **E.g.** 2008 attacks on migrants in Maharashtra.
  - **Housing and Infrastructure Strain: E.g.,** Pune has **564 slums** with an estimated **30-40% of its population.**

Government Initiatives for Migrant workers

- **Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana: P**roviding health coverage to India's most vulnerable including migrant workers.
- **Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana (PMGKY):** It provides free food grains and direct cash transfers to families below the poverty line, including migrant workers.
- **One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC) scheme: F**ood security through portability of ration cards across India.
- **e-Shram Portal: National database of unorganised workers,** integrates welfare schemes, and enables easy access to social security benefits.
- **PM Street Vendor's AtmaNirbhar Nidhi (PM SVANidhi): C**ollateral-free working capital loans to street vendors.
- **Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maan-Dhan Yojana (PMSYM): M**inimum assured pension to workers in the unorganized sector, including migrant workers, upon the age of 60.

Way Forward

- **Working Group on Migration (2015) recommendations**
  - **Legal and Policy Framework:**
    - Enact legal safeguards to protect **migrants' constitutional rights.**
    - Amend Registrar General's protocols for **caste-based enumeration of migrants**.
  - **Anti-Discrimination Measures:** Eliminate **domicile requirements** for jobs and services to uphold freedom of movement and residence.
  - **Providing Access to Basic Entitlements** such as including **migrant children in Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) Annual Work Plans**.
  - **Financial Inclusion:** Reduce cost of money remittances using **India Post's network** to prevent **informal transfers.**
- **Expanding Best Practices:** The **Kerala Migration Survey model**, conducted every five years since 1998, should be **expanded nationwide** to strengthen migration governance and policy responses.
- **Evidence-based interventions:** National Statistics Office (NSO) to conduct Survey on Migration across India from **July 2026 to June 2027 to** capture detailed information on extent/nature of migration.

Conclusion

A robust Migration strategy and Policy are vital to ensure that a citizen's constitutional rights and social safety nets are not surrendered simply because they migrated. Evidence-based interventions need research, community involvement in policy-making and social sensitization to ensure 'portable welfare' for migrants.

7.3. DECLINE IN FERTILITY RATE IN INDIA

Why in the News?

The **Sample Registration System (SRS) statistical report** shows Total Fertility Rate (TFR) for rural India for the first time touched 2.1, the replacement rate in 2023.

Key Highlights related to TFR (SRS 2024)

- **TFR**: **National** (**1.9**); Rural (2.1); Urban (1.5)
  - At least 16 States/UTs reported a TFR of below the replacement level TFR of 2.1.
- **TFR by Education:** Inverse relationship between the mother's education level and TFR.
  - TFR for illiterate women in India was **3.2** while TFR for literate women was **1.8**.
- **Gross Reproduction Rate (GRR)**: Average number of daughters a woman would have during her lifetime.
  - National (0.9); Rural GRR (1.0) slightly higher than urban GRR (0.7), suggesting that women in rural areas are having more daughters than women in urban areas.
- **Age-Specific Fertility Rates (ASFR):** Sharply **decreased for younger women (ages 15-29)** but **increased for older women** (ages 30-49).
  - **Highest fertility rate** is in the **25-29 age group**, followed by the 20-24 age group.

- **Crude Birth Rate (CBR)** is the number of live births per 1,000 population in a year.
  - **National (18.3)** in 2024, showing a decline of 0.8 points from 2022.
  - **Rural (20.2) is higher** compared to **Urban (14.7)**
  - **Highest CBR:** Bihar (**25.8**); **Lowest CBR:** Tamil Nadu (**12.0**)

Government Initiatives for Family Planning

- **National Population Policy (2000):** Set the goal of **stabilising population by achieving replacement-level fertility**, focusing on **maternal and child health** and wider access to contraception.
- **Expanded Contraceptive Basket:** New options like **Injectable contraceptive (Antara)** and **Centchroman (Chhaya) a**dded **alongside condoms, pills, IUCDs, and sterilisation** to give people more choice.
- **Mission Parivar Vikas:** Focused programme in **7 high-fertility and 6 North-Eastern states** to make family planning services more accessible.
- **Swasth Nari Sashakt Parivar Abhiyan (2025):** Health camps for screening for women's health issues like anaemia, hypertension etc., supporting immunization and nutrition to reduce maternal and child mortality.

Reasons for Decline in Fertility Rate

- **Effective Family Planning Programmes:** Promoting the **social acceptance of a "small family norm".**
- **Changing Social Attitudes towards marriage and reproduction:** Women are increasingly exercising choice by marrying late or not at all, often prioritizing careers and financial independence over motherhood.
- **High Parenting Standards:** The social expectation of **intensive parenting** (spending significant time and resources on each child's development) makes having many children seem overwhelming or impractical.
- **Improved Health and Lower Infant Mortality:** Better health conditions and low IMR are linked to higher contraceptive use and lower fertility.
- **Weakening of Son Preference:** A strong preference for sons can keep fertility rates high, as couples may continue having children until they achieve a desired number of sons.
- **Rising Infertility and Use of Abortion:** Many experts observe that rising rates of infertility in both men and women and abortions are important factors which could be contributing to this decline in fertility.

UNFPA State of World Population (SWP) 2025 report titled **'The real fertility crisis: The pursuit of reproductive agency in a changing world'.**

Key findings

- **Reproductive Agency Crisis:** The real issue is not overpopulation but the inability to achieve desired family size due to lack of choice.
  - **Reproductive agency** is the capacity to exercise informed, empowered decision-making over one's reproduction. It requires an enabling environment in which individuals and couples can make choices unfettered by legal, political, economic and normative constraints.
- **Barriers to Reproductive Freedom**
  - **Structural Challenges:** Job insecurity, housing constraints, and lack of childcare hinder family planning.
  - **Social pressures:** Family/partner pressure to have fewer children.
  - **Modern anxieties:** Financial Constraints, Climate change, political instability, loneliness, and shifting gender norms impact decisions.

Impact of declining Total Fertility Rate

Positive Impact

- **Demographic Dividend:** As fertility rates decline, the proportion of the economically active population (15–59 years) has correspondingly risen, lowering the dependency ratio related to children.
  - This can boost **economic growth** by increasing **savings and investments** in physical and human capital.

- **Women Empowerment:** Increased female participation in education and workforce; Greater autonomy in reproductive choices; improved Maternal and Child Health.
- **Reduce Social Inequities:** Slowing population growth provides an opportunity to ensure **more equitable access to public services** like education and health, which can help **reduce social and regional disparities**.
- **Environmental Sustainability:** Reduce pressures on environmental resources etc.

Negative Impact

- **Impede socio-economic progress**: Ageing and shrinking populations reduce consumption demand, potentially dampening economic growth.
- **Ageing population:** Shrinking young population raises **old-age dependency ratios,** straining pension systems, healthcare, and social security. E.g. Kerala (TFR 1.3) has the highest proportion of elderly population (15.1%).
- **Social challenges:** Increased **burden** on the working-age population to **support the elderly;** Changing **family structures** (reduced informal caregiving, reduced traditional kinship support systems), social isolation etc.
- **Uneven Regional Growth:** Fertility variations may deepen **regional inequalities and affect labour mobility and representation.**
  - All States reporting higher than replacement level TFR are in northern India E.g. Bihar, Madhya Pradesh etc.
- **Irreversibility of Fertility Decline:** Once fertility declines, it rarely rebounds. E.g. Population declines in countries such as **Japan, South Korea and Italy**.

Way Forward

- **UNFPA's Recommendations for India**
  - **Expanding Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) Services:** Universal access to contraception, safe abortion, and infertility care.
  - **Removing structural barriers:** Affordable childcare (e.g. Palna scheme), education, housing, and flexible work policies.
  - **Inclusive policies:** Extend services to LGBTQIA+, unmarried individuals, and marginalized groups.
  - **Call for Population Policy Shift: Prioritize individual rights and choices**, provide rights-based conditions that enable people to have the families they desire, rather than trying to engineer population size.
- **Adopt a differential policy approach:** While low-TFR states may need pro-natal incentives, high-TFR states require sustained investment in female education and accessible health services.
- **Rights-Based Family Planning:** Maintain the current rights-based approach to family planning by expanding the basket of contraceptive choices (moving beyond female sterilization).
- **Plan for an Ageing Population:** E.g. considering the sustainability of social security and pension systems.
- **Gender-Neutral Parental Leave:** Encourage **paid parental leave for both parents** to normalize shared caregiving and reduce the career penalty for mothers.

Conclusion

India's fertility transition reflects socio-economic progress, but sustaining demographic gains requires a rights-based approach that balances reproductive choice, human capital development and preparedness for population ageing.

7.4. GLOBAL HUNGER INDEX

Why in the news?

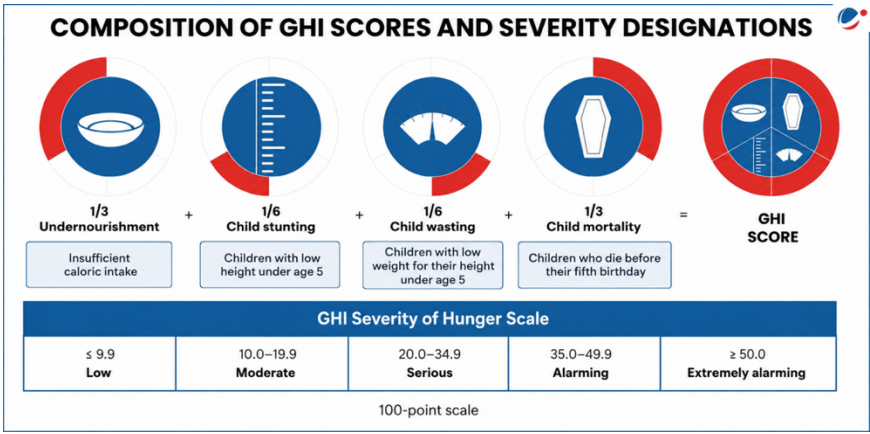
Global Hunger Index (GHI), 2025 ranks India under '**serious' category.**

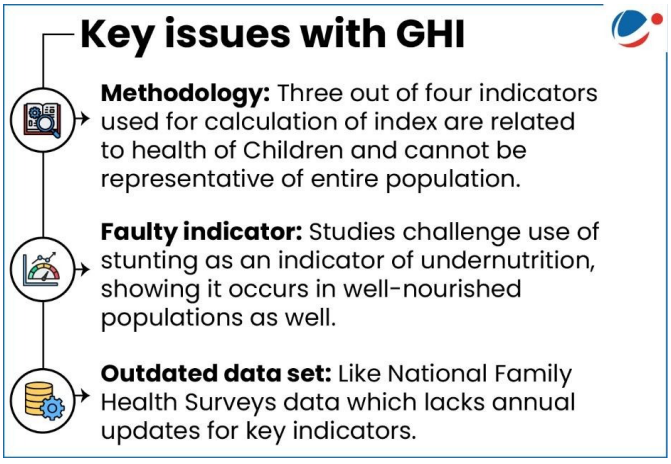
Key Findings of the report

- **India Related Findings:**
  - **Ranking**: **102nd among 123** countries with GHI score of 25.8, which is classified as **serious**.

- **Child Nutrition Crisis: 1 in 3 Indian children is stunted**. Undernourishment affects **172 million people**, 13.5 million more than in 2016.

- **Global Findings:**
  - **Achieving Zero Hunger:** At current rates, **SDG-2 (Zero Hunger by 2030)** is out of reach. **At least 56 countries** are not on track to achieve even low hunger by 2030.
  - **Regional Disparities: Serious hunger** in Africa, South Asia, and **alarming hunger** in 7 countries, like Somalia (worst), DRC, South Sudan, etc.
- **Drivers of Rising Hunger**:
  - **Globally:** Armed conflicts, climate shocks, economic fragility, and declining political and financial commitment.
  - **India:** Intergenerational Cycle of malnutrition, reduced productivity, and Poverty; Persistent poor maternal nutrition and uneven access to child-health service; etc.




Key issues with GHI
Methodology: Three out of four indicators used for calculation of index are related to health of Children and cannot be representative of entire population.
Faulty indicator: Studies challenge use of stunting as an indicator of undernutrition, showing it occurs in well-nourished populations as well.
Outdated data set: Like National Family Health Surveys data which lacks annual updates for key indicators.

Consequences of Hunger

- **Higher child mortality:** Under-nutrition is responsible for 45% of deaths among children under the age of five.
- **Lower productivity:** Hunger reduces physical capacity and cognitive efficiency, lowering **workforce productivity and economic growth.**
- **Rising healthcare burden:** Malnutrition increases illness, putting **pressure on public health systems** and raising preventable healthcare costs.
- **Others:** Poor learning outcomes, Violation of Human Right to adequate food, Famine and Catastrophe & Deepening inequalities etc.

Initiatives taken for Tackling Hunger in India

- **Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY):** To provide food grains free of costs to 80 crore poor.
- **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojna:** Registered women provided Rs 5000/- on the birth of their first child for wage support and nutritious food during pregnancy and post-delivery period.
- **POSHAN Abhiyan (National Nutrition Mission):** Aims to achieve improvement in key nutrition parameters for children and women.
- **Eat Right Movement:** Transform the country's food system to ensure safe, healthy and sustainable food.
- **Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS):** Supplementary Nutrition provided, intended to bridge gap between Recommended Dietary Allowance and Average Daily Intake.

Way Forward

- **Political commitment and good governance:** Treat **food security as a right**; strengthen accountability, coordination, and transparent monitoring.
- **Increase and diversify financing: Ensure timely and flexible financing**, adequate budget allocation for schemes and align aid with national priorities through results-based mechanisms.

- **Build resilient and inclusive food systems:** Promote **climate-resilient agriculture**, restore ecosystems, secure land and water rights, empower smallholders and women, and **integrate nutrition with agriculture**.
- **Adopt multisectoral, locally led strategies:** Link hunger reduction with health, education, WASH and social protection; **empower local governments** and communities to design solutions.
- **Others**: Strengthen **social safety nets**, connect **farmers to markets, reduce food loss,** and **prevent maternal-child malnutrition.**

Conclusion

Hunger is not merely a lack of food, but a result of poverty, conflict, climate shocks, and policy gaps. Addressing it requires resilient food systems**, targeted nutrition support, empowered communities, and global cooperation to ensure the right to food for all.**

7.5. CHILD POVERTY

Why in the News?

UNICEF released The State of the World's Children (SoWC) 2025 "Ending Child Poverty – Our Shared Imperative" report.

About the Report

Studied over 130 low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) to assess the **breadth of multidimensional poverty** by measuring **deprivations** across six categories: **Education, health, housing, nutrition, sanitation, and water**.

Key Findings

- **Monetary Poverty:** More than **19% of children** globally live in extreme monetary poverty.
- **Deprivations:** More than **1 in 5 children** in LMICs are severely **deprived in at least two vital areas** critical for their health, development, and wellbeing.
  - **~206 million children in India** experience **at least one deprivation**; ~62 million experience two or more.
  - **Sanitation is the most widespread severe deprivation**, increasing children's exposure to diseases.
- **Geographical Concentration:** Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.
- **Factors compounding poverty:** Conflict, climate and environmental crises, demographic shifts, mounting national debt, widening technological divides, unprecedented cuts to Official Development Assistance (ODA).
- **Impact:** Poverty **undermines children's health, development, and learning**, leading to weaker job prospects, shorter lifespans, and increased rates of depression and anxiety.

Five Policy Pillars for Ending Child Poverty

- Make **ending child poverty a national priority**, mobilizing resources and ensuring coordinated action across sectors.
- Integrating **children's needs into economic policies** and budgets with **child-sensitive budgeting**.
- Providing **social protection programmes**, including cash support to families.
  - E.g. Targeted **cash transfer programmes** in Brazil, Mexico and South Africa.
- **Expanding access to essential public services** E.g. education, healthcare, water, sanitation, nutrition, housing.
- **Strengthening economic security of parents and caregivers** by promoting decent work, enforcing minimum wages, increasing formalization and extending social security.

Conclusion

Ending child poverty requires sustained investment in nutrition, health, education and social protection, ensuring every child has the opportunity to realize their full potential and contribute to inclusive development.

7.6. KEYWORDS

Keywords				
Urbanization	Melting Pot	Composite culture	Agglomeration economies	Transit-Oriented Development
Migration	Total Fertility Rate (TFR)	Reproductive Agency	Demographic Dividend	Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH)
Rights-Based Family Planning	Demographic Winter	Inverted Population Pyramid	Pro-Natalist Policies	Global Hunger Index
Child Nutrition	Extreme Poverty	Multidimensional Poverty	Child Poverty	

7.7. PRACTICE QUESTION

Examine how the structural shift toward an inverted population pyramid challenges the concept of intergenerational equity and impacts the socialization of children in increasingly nuclearized urban spaces.			
Introduction	Body Part 1	Body Part 2	Conclusion
Introduce with data related to reducing TFR, growing elderly population suggesting the structural shift.	Explain how the shift is challenging intergenerational equity- increased pressure on present and future generations for care services, financial etc.	Link the issue of demographic decline with nuclear urban families, increased pressure on working age population of socialization of children, lack of social interactions and associated social isolation etc.	Conclude with need for innovative means to ensure social relationships are strengthened with support from developing institutional care services etc.

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8. MISCELLANEOUS

8.1. PASSIVE EUTHANASIA

Why in the news?

In the landmark judgment of **Harish Rana v. Union of India & Ors (2026**), the Supreme Court (SC), for the first time, permitted **withdrawal of life-supporting care** for a man who has been in a vegetative state for the past 13 years.

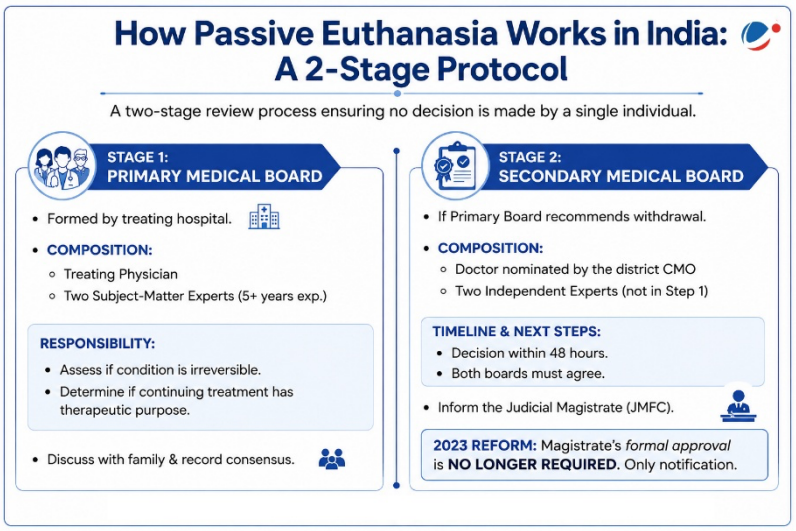
Key Highlights of Judgement

- SC **waived the 30-day consideration period** as the patient's parents and medical boards unanimously agreed that recovery was impossible.
- The judgment is governed by the **best interests of the patient principle.**
    - SC ruled that **Clinically Assisted Nutrition and Hydration (CANH)** is a medical treatment that may be lawfully withdrawn if it serves no therapeutic purpose and only prolongs a vegetative state.

About Passive Euthanasia

- Euthanasia refers to the hastening of a patient's death to relieve suffering. It is broadly classified into **two types,** i.e. **Active and Passive Euthanasia.**
    - **Active euthanasia is the deliberate, direct act** of causing a patient's death to end suffering, usually by administering lethal medication.
        - > It is **illegal in India** but legal in countries such as the Netherlands, Belgium, Canada, Australia, etc.
    - **Passive euthanasia** means allowing a person to die naturally by withholding life-sustaining treatment such as cardio-pulmonary resuscitation, ventilator support, specialised nutrition, etc.
        - > Passive euthanasia is further **classified as voluntary and non-voluntary**.
            - **Voluntary euthanasia** is where consent is taken from the patient.
            - **In non-voluntary euthanasia,** consent is unavailable on account of the condition of the patient (E.g. Harish Rana case, 2026).

Legal Status of Passive euthanasia


How Passive Euthanasia Works in India: A 2-Stage Protocol
A two-stage review process ensuring no decision is made by a single individual.
STAGE 1: PRIMARY MEDICAL BOARD
Formed by treating hospital.
COMPOSITION:
Treating Physician
Two Subject-Matter Experts (5+ years exp.)
RESPONSIBILITY:
Assess if condition is irreversible.
Determine if continuing treatment has therapeutic purpose.
Discuss with family & record consensus.
STAGE 2: SECONDARY MEDICAL BOARD
If Primary Board recommends withdrawal.
COMPOSITION:
Doctor nominated by the district CMO
Two Independent Experts (not in Step 1)
TIMELINE & NEXT STEPS:
Decision within 48 hours.
Both boards must agree.
Inform the Judicial Magistrate (JMFC).
2023 REFORM: Magistrate's formal approval is NO LONGER REQUIRED. Only notification.

- **Maruti Shripati Dubal v. State of Maharashtra (1987): Right to die** is part of the right to life (Article 21).
- **Aruna Ramchandra Shanbaug case (2011):** SC rejected a plea for euthanasia, but allowed passive euthanasia under strict conditions for **terminal and irreversible patients**.
- **Common Cause Judgment (2018): Right to die with dignity** is a fundamental right under **Article 21.**
    - SC laid down guidelines for passive euthanasia and **recognised the concept of a 'living will'**, with oversight involving DMs, judicial officers and medical specialists.
        - > A **living will (Advance Medical Directive)** refers to a **written document that a person uses to give explicit instructions in advance** about medical treatment to be administered if he becomes incompetent or is unable to communicate.
- **Modified Guidelines (2023):** SC simplified the process by reducing the role of judicial officers and establishing a **two-tier medical board system** to make decisions faster and more practical.

Arguments in favour of Passive Euthanasia

- **Patient Autonomy**: It upholds the **patient's right to make decisions** about their own life and death and **upholds their right to die with dignity**.
- **Ensures Dignified Death:** It prevents prolonged artificial survival in a vegetative or terminal state through life-sustaining treatment, aligning with humane values.
- **Reduces Suffering:** It can **avoid unnecessary pain** caused by treatment like **chemotherapy** in terminal illnesses like cancer, and is supported by the **ethical principle of beneficence** (acting in the patient's best interest).
- **Reduced burden:** It alleviates the emotional and financial burdens of prolonged life-sustaining treatments such as ventilators, ICUs, etc.
- **Legal Clarity:** Judicial recognition along with clear guidelines on Passive Euthanasia provides a structured framework (medical boards, consent procedures), reducing ambiguity for doctors and families.

Arguments against Passive Euthanasia

- **Misuse and Coercion:** There is a risk that family members may **unduly influence decisions for inheritance, financial relief, or reducing caregiving responsibilities**.
- **Sanctity of Life vs. Autonomy:** Many moral and religious traditions consider life sacred and oppose any form of hastening death, which can create tension between individual rights and societal ethical values.
- **Weak Institutional Safeguards:** Implementation challenges such as lack of awareness about living wills, limited ethics committees etc. may lead to **risk of procedural lapses**.
- **Diagnostic and Prognostic Uncertainty:** Medical science is not infallible, and cases of unexpected recovery exist. An incorrect prognosis may result in irreversible and premature end-of-life.
- **Medical Ethics**: **Principle of non-maleficence** (do no harm), aligned with Hippocratic Oath emphasizes that medical professionals must not cause harm to patients.

Way ahead

- **Multi-Tier Medical Decision Framework:** Institutionalisation of Medical Boards to ensure independent, expert-driven, and objective assessment of the patient's condition.
- **'Best Interest of Patient' Principle:** Decisions must holistically **evaluate medical factors** (irreversibility, futility of treatment) **with non-medical aspects** (dignity, suffering, wishes of caregivers).
- **Role of State and Administration:** Governments should facilitate the implementation of Common Cause Guidelines more effectively.
- **Oversight and Review Mechanisms:** Provision for reconsideration periods, **supervisory judicial intervention** (in case of disagreement), and **institutional checkpoints** to prevent misuse and ensure procedural fairness.
- **Promotion of Palliative Care:** Withdrawal of treatment should not mean abandonment but a shift to supervised **palliative and end-of-life (EOL) care that relieves pain, manages symptoms**, and preserves dignity with minimal suffering.
- **Legislative Backing**: SC urged the Central Government to consider enacting a comprehensive legislation on EOL care and passive euthanasia, which can be considered.

"This decision is not an act of surrender, but one of compassion and courage. It sits in a space between love, loss, medicine, and mercy."
Justice J.B. Pardiwala

Conclusion

The Harish Rana judgment upholds the right to die with dignity, reinforcing patient autonomy and compassion in end-of-life care. India needs a comprehensive legal framework with robust safeguards that balance individual rights with legislation, institutional mechanisms, and expanded palliative care.

8.2. RIGHT TO DISCONNECT

Why in the News?

The Private Members' Bill on 'Right to Disconnect' was moved in the Lok Sabha.

What is Right to Disconnect?

- Right to Disconnect is a **legal protection** allowing workers to **disconnect from work and ignore work-related** electronic communications during non-work hours.
- **Based on Article 24 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR):** 'Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay.'
- **Constitutional Basis of Right to Disconnect:**
  - **Article 21:** Right to Life and Liberty and dignity.
  - **Article 39:** State to ensure that health and strength of workers are not abused.
  - **Article 42**: State's responsibility to ensure just and humane working conditions.

Need for Right to Disconnect

- **Mental and Physical Health**: Constant availability in the digital age causes insomnia, high stress, sleep deprivation, mental exhaustion etc.
- **Overwork & Decline in Productivity**: E.g. Studies show productivity drops when working over 50 hours per week.
- **Socio-psychological impact**: E.g. Ernst & Young employee's death in Pune due to overwork in 2024.
- **Employer-Employee Relation**: The threat of disciplinary action for not being available 24/7 skews power dynamics in favor of employers.
- **Gender Equity**: A recent report reveals that Indian women in professional jobs, such as auditing, IT, and media, work more than 55 hours a week.

Key Caveats to Right to Disconnect

- **Logistical and Compliance Requirements**: Employers would need robust systems to monitor, implement, and enforce such legislation and in framing uniform policies across teams operating in multiple jurisdictions.
- **Essential Services Exemption**: Employees in healthcare, police, fire services, power, IT operations, and other critical sectors may be exempted during emergencies or operational needs.
- **On-Call Duties:** Workers with contractual on-call responsibilities may need to remain reachable, with such duties clearly defined and compensated.
- **Reasonable Communication**: Limited after-hours contact may be permitted for urgent or unforeseen situations, ensuring public safety or business continuity.
- **Implementation Flexibility**: Employers may need flexibility in policy design to accommodate regional, sectoral, and operational differences across India.

Global Position on 'Right to Disconnect'

- **France's El Khomri Law (2017)**: First country to formally uthoriza right to disconnect.
- **Australia's 2024 Amendment to Fair Work Legislation**: Allows employees to ignore after-hours communications without fear of being penalized, unless the refusal is deemed unreasonable (e.g., in an emergency).
- **Portugal**: It has a 'Right to Disconnect' law, which makes it illegal for employers to contact employees outside working hours, except in emergencies.
- **Spain:** Public workers and employees have the right to switch off devices.

Conclusion

The **Right to Disconnect** is a timely response to **digital-era overwork, aligning employee welfare** with constitutional values of dignity, health, and humane working conditions. With **rising stress, gendered impacts,**

and global precedents, a balanced legal framework with reasonable exemptions can restore work-life balance without compromising productivity or essential services.

8.3. NATIONAL SPORTS POLICY (NSP) 2025

Why in the News?

National Sports Policy (NSP) 2025 was launched in July 2025 aimed at **Harnessing the Power of Sports for Nation's Holistic Development.**

National Sports Policy (NSP) 2025 (**Khelo Bharat Niti, 2025**)

- **Aim:** To transform sports into a nationwide movement and a viable career path, aligned with the goals of Viksit Bharat and the aspiration to host the 2036 Olympics.
- It supersedes the existing **NSP, 2001.** India's first **NSP** was unveiled in **1984.**
- **5 Pillars of NSP 2025**
  - **Excellence on Global Stage:** Strengthen sports programs from **grassroots to elite levels**, enhance capacity and governance of **National Sports Federation,** Athlete-centric sports development, modernizing sports science, strengthen funding (e.g. Adopt an Athlete initiative) etc.
  - **Sports for Economic Development: Sports tourism**, promoting Sports **Start up and entrepreneurship**, Equipment manufacturing etc.
  - **Sports for Social Development:** Leveraging sports as a unifying force, **social inclusion** through participation of women, weaker sections, Para-athletes; promoting Indigenous sports etc. E.g. Sports promotion among **Siddi community**.
  - **Sports as a People's Movement:** Driving **mass participation**, promoting a **culture of fitness,** universal access to sports facilities, Mechanisms like School Fitness Index, Fit Workplace Index etc.
  - **Integration with National Education Policy 2020: Integrating sports into school curricula**, specialised training for teachers, etc.
- **Strategic Framework:**
  - **Strong Sports Governance**: Through a **robust regulatory** framework including legal framework. E.g. National Sports Governance Act, 2025
  - **Private Sector Engagement**: Innovative financing like **Public Private Partnerships** and **Corporate Social Responsibility.**
  - **Others:** Leverage **emerging technologies** (AI, data analytics), **National Level Monitoring Framework,** etc.
- **Significance of NSP 2025:**
  - **India' Soft Power:** Provides a roadmap to transform India into a **global sporting powerhouse, diaspora engagement**.
  - **Reap India's Demographic Dividend:** India, with 65% of its population under the age of 35, has the world's largest youth demographic.
  - **Focus on Fitness:** encouraging physical education and instilling lifelong fitness habits.

India and Sports

- **Constitution:** Sports is a **'State' subject** under **Seventh Schedule.**
- **Ministry: Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports (MYAS**)
- **Key Bodies: Sports Authority of India (SAI)** set up in 1984 under the **Societies Act, 1860** under **Department of Sports.**
- **Government Initiatives:**
  - **TOPS (Target Olympic Podium Scheme, 2014):** support for India's top athletes in their preparations for the **Olympic and Paralympic Games**.
  - **Khelo India (2017):** Promotes mass participation and sporting excellence; **Khelo India Games** etc.
  - **Khelo India Rising Talent Identification (KIRTI) programme**: It aims to build a pipeline of athletes to **position India among the top-10 sporting nations by 2036 and top-5 by 2047**. It targets children aged 9-18 for merit-based talent scouting.

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- **Fit India Movement (2019):** Make fitness an integral part of our daily lives through a **Jan Andolan** promoting an active lifestyle.
- **Others: National Sports University at Imphal, Manipur (2018), ASMITA Women's Leagues, Pension to Meritorious Sportspersons etc.**

Conclusion

The **Khelo Bharat Niti 2025** marks a paradigm shift from viewing sports merely as a recreational activity to recognizing it as a strategic driver of **sporting excellence, economic growth, social inclusion, public health and nation-building.**

8.4. NATIONAL SPORTS GOVERNANCE ACT, 2025

Why in the News?

The National Sports Governance Act, 2025 envisages a comprehensive legislation to improve the governance of the sports bodies, achieve better results in sports and reduce the disputes and litigation, involving sports federations.

Key Provisions of the Act

- **Aim:** Ensure transparency, accountability, ethics, and athlete welfare in line with the Olympic Charter, Paralympic Charter, and global best practices.
- **Establishment of National Sports Bodies**:
  - **National Olympic Committee (NOC)**: Sole governing body for Olympic sports in India.
  - **National Paralympic Committee (NPC)**: Sole governing body for Paralympic sports.
  - **Other Bodies: National Sports Federations (NSF)** & **Regional Sports Federations (RSF)**
- **National Sports Board (NSB)**: to regulate and recognise sports bodies.
  - **Appointment**: The Chairperson and Members will be appointed by the Central Government.
    - **Eligibility**: Special knowledge or practical experience in **public administration**, **sports governance**, **sports law**, or related fields.
  - **Key Functions:**
    - Maintain a register of National Sports Bodies.
    - **Constitute ad hoc administrative bodies**, or direct National Sports Bodies.
    - **Collaborate with International Sports Bodies** and **National Sports Bodies** to develop sports and promote the welfare of athletes.
- **National Sports Election Panel**: It will oversee free and fair elections for Executive and Athletes Committees of NSBs.
- **National Sports Tribunal:** Consist of a Chairperson (Supreme Court Judge or Chief Justice of a High Court) and two members with expertise in sports, public administration, and law.
  - **It** will formulate its **own procedure**, ensuring speedy resolution of sports-related disputes and expenses will be covered by the **Consolidated Fund of India.**
  - Civil courts have **no jurisdiction over matters** under **the Tribunal's purview.**
- **Code of Ethics**: Every National Sports Body is required to formulate a Code of Ethics in line with international best practices.
- **Safe Sports Policy and Grievance Redressal**: Ensuring the protection of vulnerable groups like women and minor athletes.
- **Others**: Mandatory Athletes, Ethics & Dispute Committees with women's representation; Government funded bodies under RTI for transparency.

Systemic gaps in Sports Administration

As per **Task Force Report on Capacity Building of Sports Administrators** chaired by Olympic medallist **Abhinav Bindra:**

- **Lack of Expertise**: Roles are often filled by **generalist civil servants or contractual** staff without sector-specific expertise, leading to ad-hoc decision-making.
- **Fragmented Training**: Existing training for administrators is sporadic, outdated, and lacks focus on continuous professional development.
- **Athlete Transition Barriers**: Lack of structured **"Dual Career Pathways"** to help athletes transition from competition into effective governance roles.
- **Governance Deficits**: National Sports Federations often lack role separation between Governance Board and operations leading to over-centralized authority and low transparency.

Way Forward

Proposed Multi-Level Framework by the Task Force

- **Civil Service Integration**: Integrating sports governance modules into the training of civil servants at LBSNAA to sensitize future bureaucrats to the value of sport in nation-building.
- **Performance Monitoring**: A National Performance Management and Monitoring System will link an administrator's Key Performance Indicators to their promotions and postings.
- **Apex Authority**: Establishing National Council for Sports Education & Capacity Building (NCSECB) to regulate, accredit, and certify sports administration training.
- **Operational Mechanism**: Create a National Training & Development Cell as operational arm of NCSECB, responsible for curriculum delivery, coordination and monitoring outcomes.
    - It has recommended India-specific curriculum development to train future leaders.

Conclusion

The National Sports Governance Act, 2025 marks a transformative shift towards transparent, athlete-centric and accountable sports administration, strengthening institutional governance and advancing India's aspirations as a global sporting powerhouse.

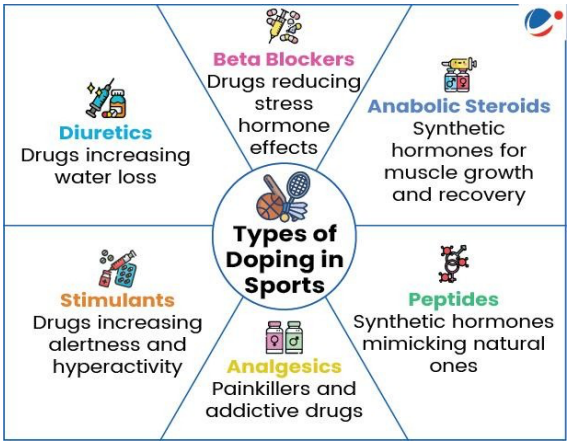
8.5. DOPING IN SPORTS IN INDIA

Why in the News?

Annual report (2024) published by **World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA)** found that India has the highest number of dope cheats in the world for the third year.

Doping: Status in India

- Doping is defined as the c**onsumption of prohibited substances (Performance Enhancing Drugs) or methods** to unfairly improve sporting performance and to gain an advantage over competitors.
- India reported **260 positive cases** for prohibited performance-enhancing drugs with a **positivity rate of 3.6%.**
- Nearly **1 in every 5 Indian athletes** tested by the NADA during a competition was dope positive.



Causes of Doping

- **Incentives & Rewards:** Medals bring cash, government jobs, or career benefits.
- **Easy Access to Substances:** Anabolic steroids and other drugs available Over-the-Counter in gyms/pharmacies.
- **Lack of Awareness:** Athletes follow trainers' advice without WADA compliance knowledge.
- **Poor Infrastructure & Support:** Inadequate facilities and scientific guidance push athletes toward shortcuts.
- **Societal & Familial Pressure:** Pressure to succeed quickly as sports is not seen as a viable career.

- **Weak Testing & Monitoring:** Limited anti-doping oversight at local and district levels.
- **Governance Issues:** Nepotism, corruption, and unfair selections reduce accountability.
- **Funding Challenges for WADA:** Reliance on developed countries. e.g., USA withheld funding in 2025.

Consequences of Doping

- **Legal & Career Impact:** Athletes face bans, loss of medals, and career termination.
- **Youth & Grassroots Impact:** Normalizes unethical practices among young athletes.
- **Talent Identification Distortion:** Clean athletes sidelined; meritocracy undermined.
- **International Isolation:** Countries with doping cases lose credibility and trust.
- **Erosion of Trust:** Sports integrity and core values compromised.
- **Psychological Effects:** Fear, guilt, anxiety, and depression among athletes.
- **Economic Losses:** Sponsorships and funding withdrawn, causing financial instability.
- **Damage to Sports Institutions:** Credibility of federations and agencies weakened.
- **Public Health Concerns:** Unregulated substance use risks health and safety.

National Anti-Doping (Amendment) Act, 2025

- Designed to amend the **National Anti-Doping Act, 2022,** it provides greater **"operational independence"** to **National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA)** in alignment with global anti-doping standards (World Anti-Doping Code, UNESCO convention against doping in sports).
- It prohibits doping in sports, and provides a framework for testing, enforcement, and adjudication of violations.
- It specifies a list of conduct or circumstances as **Anti-Doping Rule Violations**.
- Establishes the **National Board for Anti-Doping in Sports** to oversee activities of NADA and advise the central government on anti-doping regulations.
- **Central government** is empowered to constitute an **Appeal Panel** to hear appeals against decisions of the **Disciplinary Panel**.

Other Initiatives taken to stop Doping in India

- **NIDAMS Portal:** NADA India Data Administration and Management System Digital system to manage and authorize anti-doping operations.
- **NADA India Mobile App:** Provides anti-doping rules, prohibited substances list, and test results.
- **Education Programmes:** Nationwide sensitization for athletes, coaches, trainers, and medical staff.
- **High-Performance Training Centres (HPTCs):** On-site anti-doping booths, outreach, and education.
- **Testing:** Both in-competition and out-of-competition testing at events and training venues.
- **Social Media Campaigns:** Promote apps like "Know Your Medicine" (KYM).

Conclusion

Achieving a "Dope Free India" requires a transformative shift from reactive enforcement to a holistic ecosystem of prevention and integrity. By integrating advanced scientific monitoring like the **Athlete Biological Passport** with robust education for athletes and their support networks, the strategy ensures that compliance is driven by awareness.

8.6. KEYWORDS

Keywords				
Passive Euthanasia	Right to die with dignity	Living will (Advance Medical Directive)	Ethical principle of beneficence	Palliative Care
Right to Disconnect	work-life balance	Overwork	global sporting powerhouse	Sports as a People's Movement

Khelo Bharat Niti 2025	Sports Governance	National Sports Board (NSB)	Safe Sports Policy	Sports Education
Doping	Performance Enhancing Drugs	Dope Free India	National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA)	World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA)

8.7. PRACTICE QUESTION

Systemic deficits and structural centralization in sports bodies have long compromised athlete welfare and institutional transparency in India. Critically evaluate how the provisions of the National Sports Governance Act, 2025, attempt to rectify these deep-seated governance gaps.			
Introduction	Body Part 1	Body Part 2	Conclusion
Introduce with significance of sports governance in growth of sports in India.	Highlight the Challenges in Sports governance such as centralization, lack of expertise, conflict of interest etc.	Critically evaluate the key provisions of the National Sports Governance Act, 2025. E.g. NADA's autonomy secured but it lacks testing infrastructure etc.	Conclude with need to ensure effective enforcement of law to ensure good governance in sports.

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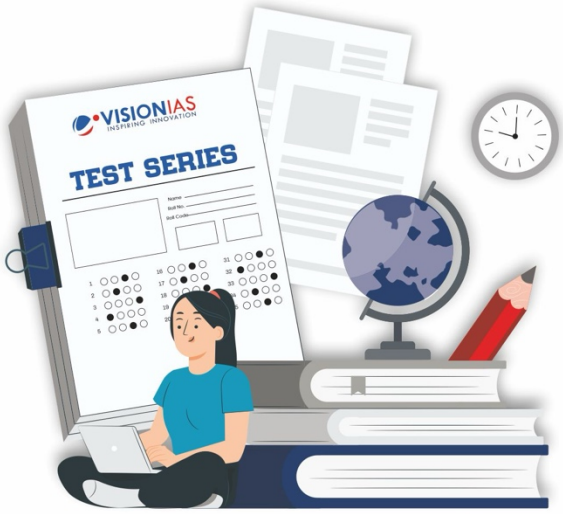

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9. APPENDIX: KEY DATA AND FACTS

INDIAN SOCIETY	
Decolonising the Indian Mind	• **Panchpran Pledge:** Includes a resolve of developed India; removing any trace of colonial mindset; taking pride in our legacy; India's strength of unity and fulfilling the duties of citizens with honesty.
Social Isolation	As per WHO report, • About **1 in 6 people feel lonely** (2014–2023) with young people (ages 13-29) feeling the loneliest. • Loneliness caused **~871,000 deaths** (2014-2019)
Middle-Class Vulnerability	• Graduate **unemployment stands at 29.1%, nine times higher** than for those without schooling. • Middle-income households saw **only 0.4% CAGR income growth** (2012-13 to 2023-24). • **Household debt** reached about **45.5% of GDP** by September 2025, driven largely by consumption-related borrowing. (RBI) • Net household financial savings hit a low of ~5% of GDP; Top 1% captures over 22% of national income (World Inequality Lab).
AI and Society	• **Principles for Responsible Management of AI (NITI Aayog):** Safety and Reliability; Equality; Inclusivity and Non-discrimination; Privacy and security; Transparency; Accountability; Protection and Reinforcement of Positive Human Values
Marriage	• **Laws:** Hindu Marriage Act, 1955; Special Marriage Act, 1954; Personal Laws of different communities; Prohibition of Child Marriages Act, 2006 • **Polygamy:** Multiple spouses simultaneously; Hindu Marriage Act,1955 and Sec 82 of BNS prescribes punishment for bigamy; Assam passed the Assam Prohibition of Polygamy Bill, 2025 • **Mean age at marriage for women: 22.9 years (SRS 2023).**
Live-in Relationships	**Related Supreme Court Judgements** • **Lata Singh v. State of Uttar Pradesh (2006):** State must protect adults exercising partner choice. • **K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India (2017):** Article 21 protects decisional freedom in intimate matters. • **Shafin Jahan vs. Asokan K.M. And Others, (2018):** Right to marry a person of one's choice is integral to Article 21
Youth's Role in Nation Building	• **Demographic dividend:** India has the largest youth population with 50% under 25 years of age and 65% under 35. • **Challenges**: Unemployment rate (15-29 years): ~10%; Low employability: 54.81% graduates employable (India Skills Report 2025) • **Unique Characteristics of Youth protests:** Decentralised, leaderless, flexibility in organization, technology and social media mobilization, youth-centric, intersectional issues, hybrid tactics (use of innovative means e.g. memes)
WOMEN	
Women-Led Development	• Advancing gender equality could potentially lead to a **30% increase in India's GDP. (NFHS)** • **46% of elected representatives** in local governments are women.

	• FY26 features India's highest-ever gender budget at ₹5.01 lakh crore (9.37% of the Union Budget). • Women who have ever used internet (15-49 years) doubled from 33% (NFHS-5) to 64.3% (NFHS-6 2023-24) but gender gap exists (80.5% men). • Low Female Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) (41.7% in 2023-24). • **Tirupati Resolution on women-led development (2025):** calling for gender-lens governance, gender-responsive budgeting, bridging the digital divide, and promoting women in STEM.
WEF Global Gender Gap Report 2025	• **Global Gender gap is over 30%;** full parity may take **123 years.** • **India:** Ranked **131st** out of 148 countries (down from 129 in 2024) • Improvements in **Economic Participation and Opportunity, Educational Attainment, Health.** • **Political Empowerment: Share of female MPs declined** from **14.7% to 13.8%;** share of women ministers fell from 6.5% to 5.6%. • **Women's unpaid care work equals 15–17% of GDP**. Women of working age **spend 5.6 hours on unpaid work** daily **(~6X more** than men- 30 minutes**).** (Time Use Survey-NSO).
Dowry in India	• **State of U.P. vs Ajmal Beg Case, 2025:** SC Directions to tackle Dowry E.g. Appointment of Dowry Prohibition Officers • India recorded **5,737 dowry deaths in 2024.** • **Nearly 16 women died every day** due to dowry-related violence. • 27.2% cases under 'Crimes against Women' were registered under **'Cruelty by Husband or Relatives'. (NCRB 2024)** • **Legal Provisions:** Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961; Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) Section 80 and 85. • "**4P approach**" i.e. **Punishment** (deterrence), **Protection** (victim support), **Prevention** (social norm change), and **Promotion** of women's empowerment
Violence against Women	• **4.41 lakh** crimes against women (NCRB 2024) • **Cruelty by husband/ relatives (27.2%),** kidnapping/abduction (15.4%), POCSO Act cases (15.4%) • **Technology Facilitated Violence against Women and Girls (TFVAWG):** prevalence (16–58%) • **Chapter V of the Bhartiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS)**: Offences against women and children • **'Mission Shakti': 'Sambal'** (women safety) and **'Samarthya' (**women empowerment)
Domestic Violence	• 20 years of The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (PWDVA), 2005 • **Decline in Registered DV Cases:** From **507 cases** in **2021** to **468 in 2022**. **(NCRB)** • **Reduction in spousal violence (**18-49 years) from 29.2% (NFHS-5, 2019–20) to 22.3% (NFHS-6, 2023-24).
Women at Workplace	• **Women's Employment Rate (WPR) grew** from 22% (2017-18) to 40.3% (2023-24). (PLFS) • Women received 68% of **MUDRA loans** and form 44% of PM SVANidhi beneficiaries. • **Women-led MSMEs almost doubled** (2010-11 to 2023-24), generating ~89 lakh jobs for women

	• **Maternity Penalty:** ~75% working mothers face career setbacks due to inadequate workplace support. • Ensuring **70% female workforce participation** is identified as a critical pillar for achieving the target of a **$30 trillion economy and** the vision of **Viksit Bharat by 2047**.
Women in STEM	• Female STEM enrolment rose to 42.6% (2021-22). • India contributes to 42.7% of global female STEM graduates, yet only 27% of the STEM workforce is female.
CHILDREN	
Rising Suicides Among Students	• India reports **highest youth suicides in the world** with **18-30 age** group accounting for **33%** and **18–45 age** group accounting **for ~65% of all suicide cases**. (NCRB 2024) • **8.5%** of the total cases of **suicides** are related to **students. (NCRB 2024)** • Suicides are among the leading causes of death in the 15–29 age group (SRS). • **Sukdeb Saha v State of Andhra Pradesh:** SC Guidelines for educational/coaching institutions • **Amit Kumar v. Union of India:** SC Directions to address rise in student suicides in HEIs. E.g. Unified Well-being Framework, Well-being audits etc.

Digital Addiction a Public Health Threat	• 74% of students spend more than 2 hours/day on screens for non-academic purposes, and 21% exceed 4 hours/day. (National Council of CBSE Schools study)
	• An estimated **7-10% of Indian adolescents** have diagnosable **mental health conditions.** (National Mental Health Survey).
	• **Social Media Ban for Children:**
	  ○ Nationwide ban on social media: Australia, Indonesia, Malaysia (Under 16); France (under 15).
	  ○ Karnataka became first state to ban social media for children under 16.

Juvenile Justice (JJ) System in India	• **Inconsistent JJBs**: As of 2023-2024, there were **707 JJBs across 765 districts**. • **55% of JJ cases** filed before 362 **Juvenile Justice Boards (JJBs)** remained **pending** as of October 31, 2023 due to resource constraints; high institutionalisation in observation homes (~83%). • **24% JJBs functioned without a full bench.**
Child Labour	• **10.1 million (3.9%)** children engaged in child labour in India. **(Census 2011)** • **Agriculture** remains the largest employer. • Child labour declined by **20 million since 2000**, but target of **eliminating child labour by 2025 (SDG 8.7)** not achieved.
Child Marriage	• **Overall decline** from 47.4% (2005–06) to **23.3% (2019–21). (NFHS-5)** • **Highest prevalence**: West Bengal (42%), Bihar (40%), Tripura (39%). • 40% of girls from the lowest wealth quintile married as children, versus 8% from the highest quintile. • Higher prevalence of child marriage among Scheduled Castes and Tribes (SC/STs) with 26% marrying below the stipulated legal age. (NFHS-5) • **Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5.3** aims to eliminate all harmful practices, including child, early, and forced marriages, by 2030.

Child Adoption in India	• **As per Children in India 2025 Report**
	  ○ Total adoptions **increased** from 3,927 (2017-18) to **4,515 (2024-25).**
	  ○ **Average waiting period** for prospective parents is **~3.5 years (**2025).

VULNERABLE SECTIONS	
Tribal Population	• **Population**: **10.45 crore (8.6%)** (2011 census) • **40.6% ST** population is **below poverty line** (Tribal Health Report). • **75 Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs),** living in remote and hard-to-reach areas. • **Adi Karmayogi Abhiyan: tribal grassroots leadership programme**, to develop a Cadre of **20 lakh,** to operate **in over 1 lakh tribal-dominated** villages across 30 States/UTs.
Transgender Persons	• 2011 Census estimated 4.8 lakh transgender persons. • Literacy rate only 56.1% among transgenders • **~96%** of transgender persons face **discrimination in employment,** with **only 6%** engaged in **formal sector jobs**. (NHRC 2018) • **~27% reportedly denied medical services** due to their gender identity (NALSA). • HIV prevalence among transgenders is 3.8% (≈20× national average). • **Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019 (2026 Amendment):** revised definition, issue of certificate of identity based on verification etc. • **Important SC Judgements**: NALSA vs UoI (2014) recognized as third gender; Navtej Singh Johar vs UoI (2018) decriminalized same-sex relations. • **Yogyakarta Principles** for gender-based human rights, recognising gender self-identification.
Elderly Care	• **India's Elderly Population (60+): 104 million (8.6%)** in Census 2011; projected **230 million (15%) by 2036 and ~20% by 2050.** • **Feminization of Ageing: 1,065 elderly women/ 1,000 men;** women form 58% of elderly, 54% of them are widows. • **Global Trend:** Elderly population to rise from **1 billion (2020) to 2.1 billion (2050);** two-thirds will live in LMICs. • **India's silver economy is valued at ~₹73,000 Crore (2024).**
EDUCATION	
National Education Policy (NEP) 2020	**Key Targets:** • **100% GER in preschool to secondary level by 2030.** • **6% Public Investment in Education (% of GDP)** • **50% GER in higher education including vocational education by 2035.** • **At least 50% of learners through school and higher education to have exposure to vocational education by 2025.** **Key Achievements** • Centre and states together spend around **4.1% of GDP on education**. • Total number of **teachers** has crossed the **1 crore** mark in **2024–25** and **Pupil-Teacher Ratios (PTRs)** surpassed NEP's recommended 1:30 ratio. • **Literacy:** Ladakh became the first fully literate administrative unit followed by Mizoram, Goa and Tripura.
School Education	• **Old Academic Structure GER (%):** 90.9 (Primary- Grade I to V); 90.3 (Upper Primary - Grade VI to VIII); 78.7 (Secondary - Grade IX & X); 58.4 (Higher Secondary- Grade XI & XII) • **New NEP Structure GER (%):** 41.4 (Foundational- Pre-Primary to Grade II); 95.4 (Preparatory- Grade III to V); 90.3 (Middle- Grade VI to VIII); 68.5 (Secondary- Grade IX to XII)

	• Only ~5% schools offer continuous Grade 1–12 • **Educational Inequality:** Only **35%** of schools accommodate **children with special needs (CWSN), 38%** have **trained CWSN teachers,** and only **55%** of students feel **motivated to attend. (PARAKH)** • **Poor Learning Outcomes**: 50%+ Class V students can't read two grades below level (ASER)
Three-Language Formula in Education	• State to facilitate instruction in mother-tongue at primary stage especially for linguistic minorities (**Article 350A**) and Directives for development of Hindi language (**Article 351**). • **National Education Policy, 1968**: Adopted 3-language formula based on the recommendation of **Kothari Commission (1964-65).** • **National Education Policy (NEP), 2020**: Advocates utilization of home language, mother tongue, local language, or regional language as the medium of instruction at least **until Grade 5**, but preferably **till Grade 8 and beyond.** ○ NEP 2020 requires **at least 2 of the 3 languages to be Indian** as against NEP 1968 which mandated Hindi, English, and a regional language.
Higher Education in India	• **India** saw **Five-fold increase** in representation in QS World University Rankings 2026 (11 universities in 2015 to 54 in 2026). • The current GER of **28.4% (2021-22)** falls significantly short of the **50% target (by 2035)** under NEP 2020. • **Less than 39%** of universities nationwide accredited, largely due to **high costs** involved. • **75% of HEIs lack industry readiness (TeamLease EdTech).** • Government expenditure on R&D is low (**~0.7% of GDP**) • **Issues in Higher Education Governance: Multiple regulators;** ~65% of the UGC budget is utilised by Central Universities, while State Universities, which handle the bulk of student enrolment, receive only 35%; 50% faculty vacancies etc. • **Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan Bill, 2025:** To create a **unified regulatory architecture for higher education** in India.

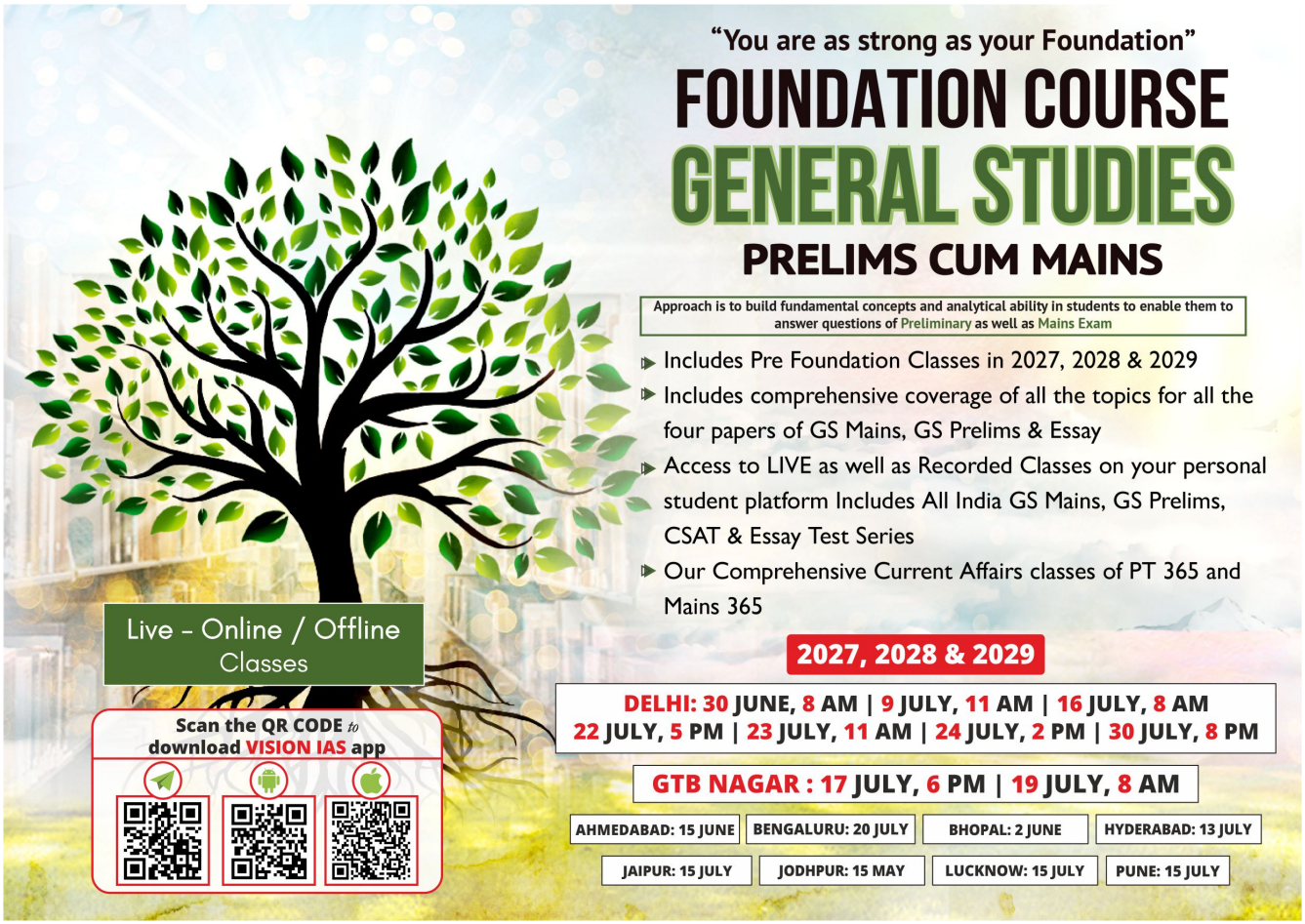
Internationalization of Education	• **Outward remittances**: Increased by over **2,000%** in a decade, reaching nearly **USD 3.4 billion** in 2023–24 (~ **53% of India's Union higher education budget**).
	• **Brain Drain**: Outbound student numbers rose from 6.85 lakh (2016) to 18 lakh+ (2025). (Economic Survey 2025)
	  ○ For every international student entering India, **28 Indian students study abroad**.
	• Under **UGC** (Setting Up and Operation of Campuses of Foreign Higher Educational Institutions in India) **Regulations (2023), 15 foreign HEIs** are expected to establish campuses in India. (Economic Survey 2025-26)
	  ○ E.g. Deakin University (Australia), Queen's University Belfast (UK) opening campus in India at **GIFT City, Gujarat;** University of Southampton (UK) campus at Gurugram.
	• **Indian Institutions Establishing Campuses Abroad E.g. IIT Madras (Zanzibar, Tanzania)**
	• **NITI Aayog recommendations:** Inter-Ministerial Task Force; Bharat Vidya Kosh; Vishwa Bandhu flagship scholarship; Bharat ki AAN (Alumni Ambassador Network) etc.

HEALTH	
Mental Health	• **10.6%** of adults in India suffer from **mental disorders.** (National Mental Health Survey 2015-16) • **70-92% Treatment gap**, contributing to 2443 disability-adjusted life years (DALYs) per 10,000 population. (NMHS) • Individuals aged 25-44 years most affected by mental illnesses • **Productivity loss, absenteeism, economic loss** estimated at **USD 1.03 trillion** (2012-2030) (WHO). • **Union Budget 2026–27: NIMHANS-2,** upgraded Ranchi/Tezpur institutes as Regional Apex Institutions**, and Emergency & Trauma Care Centres in district hospitals.**
Drinking Water and Sanitation	• **1 in 4 (2.1 billion people)** globally lack access to safely managed drinking water • **India: Near universal access to basic sanitation,** but **slippage in use** and **quality of waste management.**

Drug Abuse	• **Kashi Declaration for Drug-Free India**: Sets a 5-year **roadmap** for De-Addiction Movement
	• As per **National Survey on Substance Use, 2019**
	  ○ **Prevalence of Alcohol Use: 14.6%** between the age of **10 and 75 years.**
	  ○ **Cannabis and Opioids** (e.g., heroin) are the next commonly used substances in India.
	• **15.1%** of students reported lifetime substance use, **10.3%** reported past-year use of psychoactive substances. (National Medical Journal of India study)

NUTRITION, POVERTY, DEVELOPMENTAL ISSUES	
Urbanization	• **Urban population**: 36.87% (World Bank, 2024); 31.1% (Census 2011) • Indian Population living **in Cities (40.3%), Towns (43.8%)** and rural (15.9%) (UN-DESA World Urbanization Prospects 2025) • **40% Urban population by 2036** (World Bank) and **50% by 2047.** • **Growth Engines**: Urban areas contribute **~70% of GDP**. (World Bank); **15 major cities** contribute **30% of India's GDP**
Migration	• **Overall migration rate** is 28.9%. (PLFS 2020-21) • Nearly **one in four** rural Indians (26.8%) was a migrant in 2020-21. (Economic Survey 2025-26). • **Types: Rural to rural (highest- 55%), rural to urban (**18.9%**), urban to urban (**15.9%**), urban to rural** (10%)**. (MoSPI)** • **Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal** account for **~48% of outbound migrants**
Decline in Fertility rate in India	**As per Sample Registration System (SRS) 2024** • **TFR**: **National (1.9)**; Rural (2.1); Urban (1.5) • **Age-Specific Fertility Rates (ASFR):** Sharply **decreased for younger women (ages 15-29)** but **increased for older women** (ages 30-49). • **Crude Birth Rate (CBR**): National (18.3) in 2024, showing a decline of 0.8 points from 2022.
Hunger	**Global Hunger Index (GHI), 2025** • **India ranked 102nd among 123** countries with GHI score of 25.8, which is classified as **serious**. • **1 in 3 Indian children is stunted**.

	Child Poverty: ~206 million children in India experience **at least one deprivation**; ~62 million experience two or more.
MISCELLANEOUS	
Passive Euthanasia	• **Harish Rana v. Union of India & Ors (2026)**: Based on **best interests of the patient principle, SC for the first time permitted passive euthanasia.** • **Maruti Shripati Dubal v. State of Maharashtra (1987): Right to die** is part of the right to life (Article 21). • **Common Cause Judgment (2018):** SC Guidelines for passive euthanasia, recognised the concept of 'Living Will' (Advance Medical Directive).
Sports	• **5 Pillars of National Sports Policy (NSP) 2025:** Excellence on Global Stage, Sports for Economic Development, Sports for Social Development, Sports as a People's Movement, Integration with National Education Policy 2020 • **National Sports Governance Act, 2025:** Establishment of **National Sports Bodies,** National Olympic Committee (NOC), National Paralympic Committee (NPC); **National Sports Board (NSB)** to regulate and recognise sports bodies. • **Doping in Sports**: Nearly **1 in every 5 Indian athletes** tested by the NADA during a competition was dope positive.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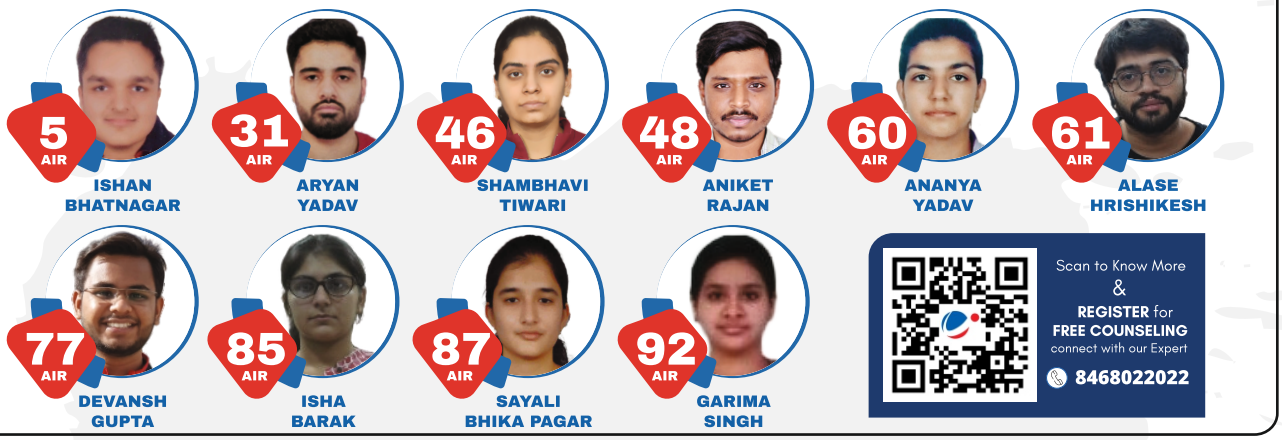

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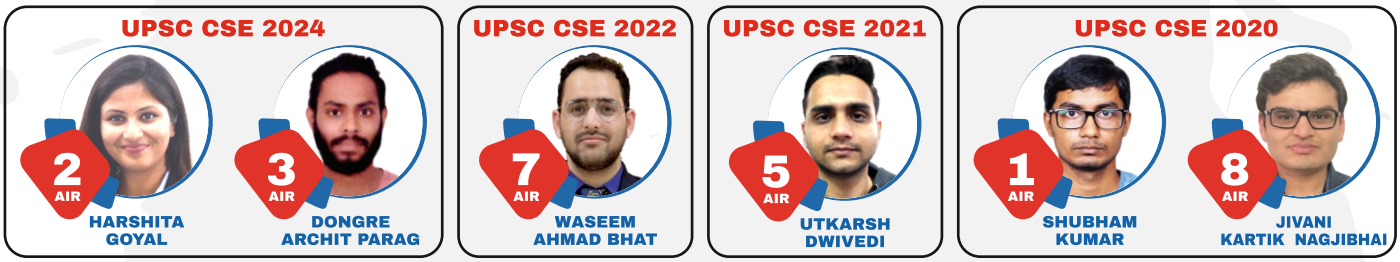

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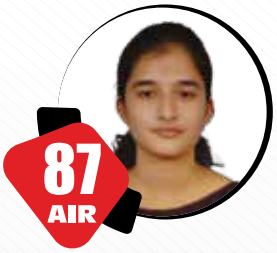

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